

---

# THE BIBLICAL CHURCH

---

**The defining features of a  
Biblical Church and the mission  
of the church**

**NICO VAN ZYL**



# The Biblical Church

**The defining features of a  
Biblical church and the  
mission of the church**

Nico van Zyl

**Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from  
The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version),  
copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good  
News Publishers. Used by Permission. All rights reserved.**

**The Biblical Church**

**by**

**Nico van Zyl**

**Published by Truths Transform**

**3 Vosloo Street, Birchleigh, Kempton Park, 1618, South Africa**

**Cover-photo used by permission.**

**Permission is granted to use this book for Discipleship  
purposes and Bible studies in any setting and to reprint, or  
quote from any chapter of this book on condition that the  
passage is quoted in context and that due acknowledgement  
of the source is given.**

**Copyright© 2023 by Nico van Zyl**



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
---------------------	----------

## The defining features of a Biblical Church

<b>1. The church as the body of Christ</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. It is Word centered and Christ centered in its worship</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3. It has the 66 books of the Bible as its Foundation</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4. It is gospel driven in all its activities</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>5. It is fed by expository preaching and Bible studies</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>6. It saturates itself in prayer</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>7. It is led by Biblical elders and pastors</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>8. It promotes personal discipleship and growth</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>9. It is world-mission minded</b>	<b>120</b>

## Messages taken from the Mission of the church

<b>a) Beholding and reflecting Christ</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>b) Reaching the unsaved</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>c) Training leaders</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>d) Planting Biblical diverse churches</b>	<b>175</b>

<b>Appendix: What about church discipline?</b>	<b>191</b>
--	------------

# Introduction

This book was born out of a ministry called African Pastors' Conferences. Pastor Irving Steggles was the South African director for more than 14 years of this ministry and he usually chose the topics of each year's run of Conferences. I became the Conference Manager in 2016. So, I had the privilege of organizing more than 50 conferences each year across Africa. APC works in more than 10 countries in Africa. So, each year Pastor Irving Steggles who passed away in April in 2020, chose the theme and the specific topics of that year. In 2019, the theme was, "The defining features of a Biblical Church". I had the privilege as the Conference Manager to speak at many conferences and to listen to other speakers handle the topics and prepare my own on each subject. So, in the course of 2018, 2019 I prepared and preached all the nine topics. At the end of the 2019 I had the privilege to choose the theme "The mission of the church" and the topics. So, although we only had 2 conference runs on the new topic on the mission of the church, I included the four topics I worked on in this book. So, this book is the result of preparations I did for these conferences on these two themes.

We leaned heavily on Mark Dever's book, *Nine Marks of a healthy Church*, so you will see that Irving's topics overlap with that book's nine marks although these are some are different. It was my joy to listen to many seasoned pastors on the African continent handle these topics and to preach these topics multiple times. I decided after a few years to put my messages on these topics in a book and hope that many ministry leaders and pastors would benefit in reading them when they think about what makes a church healthy and Biblical. There is a lot more to say on the church and I have not included topics on membership although I have touched on those topics briefly in session 1 on the body of Christ and in the appendix on church discipline. May this book be used of God to help ministry leaders around the world to work for the glory of God and be God's instruments in building Biblical and healthy churches to the glory of God and by the power of the Spirit.

Sola Deo Gloria  
Nico van Zyl

## **1. The church as the body of Christ**

### **1 Corinthians 12:1-28**

- 1) Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.
- 2) You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols; however you were led.
- 3) Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
- 5) and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;
- 6) and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
- 7) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- 8) For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,
- 9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
- 10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
- 11) All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.
- 12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
- 13) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- 14) For the body does not consist of one member but of many.
- 15) If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 16) And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?

18)But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

19)If all were a single member, where would the body be?

20)As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

21)The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22)On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

23)and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,

24)which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

25)that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

26)If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27)Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

28)And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

29)Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

30)Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

31)But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:1-31 ESV).

## **Introduction**

When you look at prominent organizations in the world, and you see a lot of activities and programs or services, and you look at some churches, you might conclude that the church is like an organization. Many churches have their programs, services, schools, operations, and members, and you who look from the outside may think the church is like an organization. And in a sense, the church should be organized; there are activities in the life of the church, and there should be ministries that benefit the world. It should be organized.

But the church is more like an organism. What I mean by that is that it is, in the first place, a living thing. It is not dead. And every part of this organism is

dependent on the other parts. Take, for example, the body's organs and the different systems in the human body. You cannot take out the stomach and think the body will work at all. Or gouge out a human of his eyes and consider the body will function normally. Think about the nervous system or reproductive system. If something goes wrong with the nervous system and the body cannot feel pain anymore, or it experiences too much pain, the whole body is affected. Every part of the human body depends on the other parts of the body. Every piece has a specific vital function to fulfil in the body. The church, as the human body, is a living thing, and every part of the body affects and influences the other parts.

The church is not just about activities and programs, and operations. The church is about people that feel and have various challenges. God sovereignly puts them together for the benefit of each other.

There are different metaphors in the Bible used for the church of Christ: The Vine and the branches. Christ is the Vine, and the church is the branches. In the Marriage metaphor, Christ is the Husband, and the church is the bride. The building and the stones, the church being the stones and Christ being the Chief Cornerstone. Or the Shepherd and the sheep, Christ being the Shepherd and the church being the sheep. In all these metaphors of Christ and the church, at least one thing shines as clearly as a crystal. Christ is the essential, important one. There will be no branches if there is no Vine. There will be no life in the branches if there is no Vine. The man in the marriage is the leader. He is the one who provides, who protects and leads in the marriage. So, it is with a building. The church is the living stones. But there will be no building without a foundation and cornerstone. The building will collapse. There is no life in a human body without its head! Christ is the Head, and the church is his body.

**1. Christ is the Head of the body (The Vine and branches)**

**2. We are members of Christ; we are members of his body**

**3. We are baptized into and dependent on the Holy Spirit**

**4. The local and the global body**

**5. The characteristics of the body (Ephesians 4:1-13)**

**❖ It's visible and invisible**

**❖ It is holy**

**❖ It is universal**

❖ It is one

❖ It is apostolic and prophetic

❖ It has one confession

6. We all have different gifts and ministries (we are all unique)

7. We are members of one another. We are interdependent.

8. We are there for God's glory

## 1. Christ is the Head of the body (The Vine and branches)

Ephesians: 1:20 states: “And He (God) put all things under his (Christ's) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”

When the Scriptures talk of Christ being the Head of the body, it means He is the essential part of this union. He is the control center. He is the one making the decisions. He is the One who determines the operations of the body. He is the One who controls and leads the body. Christ is the Head of the body because He is the Source of the body. He is the One who created the church. Matthew 16:16-20 tells us that Christ is building his church, and the gates of hell will not be able to destroy it. Christ is the One who gave his life for the church, his sheep, who died on the cross, who sacrificed his life so that there can be a church.

It is important to note that the church did not begin at pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon the disciples, it was not the beginning of the church—the church consists of all believers in God of all ages (Ephesians 2:20; 3:8-20). The Old Testament believers were part of the church. They didn't have the same light and revelation of God as we have today, but they were saved by faith in the promises of God in the Messiah and the power of the Holy Spirit. Abraham and Noah and Moses and Joshua and Esther and Samuel and David and all the prophets and all the godly men and women in Israel were part of the church because they had a measure of the Holy Spirit; they believed in God and the coming Messiah. Christ was their Head, as He is the Head in this administration of the fullness of the Spirit.

To make an important note: Christ is the head because of His finished work on the cross. He is the Head because of his perfect obedience to the law as a true

human. Christ is the Head because He is God, the God-man. Christ is the Head because of his resurrection from the dead and because all authority and power and dominion have been given to Him by the Father (Matthew 28:18). He has ascended to heaven, and he is now ruling and reigning from heaven and acting as our High Priest, as our Mediator and Intercessor (Phillipians 2:5-11; Hebrews 7:25). He has paved the way to heaven. He is our Forerunner. He is the exalted One, our Savior and Lord. He is, therefore, our Head, our Salvation, our Rock, our Safety, our Refuge, our Fortress and our Protection (Psalm 18:1-3).

The church of Jesus Christ is unique in the world. There is nothing like it in this world. The word “church” literally in Greek means “ecclesia”. It means the assembled ones. The church is the “called out” ones to assemble before God. We are called out from the world to belong to God and Christ. We are the ones who have been rescued and called out by God to belong to Him. The Old Testament church was also called out of Egypt, from false religions, to belong to God.

## **2. We are members of Christ; we are members of his body**

1 Corinthians 12:12 “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”  
1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

The church are members of Christ. This means they are closely connected to Christ. They have been identified with Christ. That is why the members of His body are called Christians. You may ask: how is your arm or eye, or foot connected to your head? When you are born, you have all these members in your body. God created us to have many members. As humans, we need eyes and ears and mouths and hands and feet and noses and hearts and kidneys and different systems to function and to be humans. All these members make us human beings.

To be a member of Christ is to belong to Christ. To be a member of Christ is to have a vital union with Christ. It is to experience his life in you. It is to have his life in you. In short, it is to be born again and be filled with the Spirit.

And we know how this happens: when we repent of our sins and believe in Christ, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into His body, into Christ. That is what the Scripture says:

“For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

When God regenerates us and gives us spiritual life, it is not by our own power that we get this life (John 3:3-6). This life is a gift from God. You have so little to do with your spiritual birth as you have to do with your natural birth. It is not by the will of the flesh or the will of man that anyone is born again from the Spirit (John 1:12,13). But when we are born again, or when God sovereignly determines to make us spiritually alive, God ignites in us the gifts of faith and repentance. We become aware of our guilt and sinfulness to such a degree that we know we stand condemned before God. And when this happens, through the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, God rivets our attention to Christ and his finished work on the cross, and God sends gospel ministers to preach the gospel to us, and we cry out for mercy, and we trust in Christ (Romans 10:13-17; John 16:14). And when we believe that Christ is Lord and Savior, and died for our sins, and for us personally, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and receive forgiveness of sins, and we are reconciled to God, and we receive the gift of eternal life.

At this time of trusting alone in Christ for salvation, we are baptized into the body of Christ, and we start to drink from the Spirit. As our text says: we are made to drink of one Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

When this happens, God counts us as His members, members of His body. We are identified with Christ for all eternity. We are dead with Him, dead to sin, and alive to righteousness (Romans 6:11-14). We have died with Him and risen with Him to new life (Romans 6:1-11). Baptism is a sign of the reality that we are united to Christ. But not only to Christ but to his body, his church.

### **3. We are baptized into and dependent on the Holy Spirit**

So, when we have received the Holy Spirit and are baptized into the Spirit, we become dependent on the operations and life of the Spirit of God. The life of

the Spirit is the life of Jesus Christ within us (Romans 8:1,2). In fact, when we become members of Christ, of his body, we are baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). This means that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have come to make their home within us (John 14:21-23). When the Scripture says that we all were made to drink of the Spirit, it means our Life-Source is the Holy Spirit. As the body needs water to operate, so the spiritual life of a Christian is utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit. We cannot, as humans function without water; we will die. We cannot function without the Holy Spirit. We will die without Him. He is our Life, our Satisfaction, our Joy and our Hope. The word, baptized, signify immersion. We are being immersed into the life of Someone else. In the case of a Christian, we are immersed into the life of God.

If we come to understand how dependent we are, in fact, on the life of the Holy Spirit, we will be humble people. We will be a praying people; we will be a people that seek to draw strength from God, constantly, day by day and hour by hour.

#### **4. The local and the global body**

Although this text in 1 Corinthians talks to the believers in Corinth, a local church, there is a sense that the body of Christ consists of all the members of Christ of all ages, those who believed and believe and will believe in Christ. Each local church is a body of Christ. Each local church is a body. We need to be part of a local church when we become Christians. One member cannot be a body. We are not lone Christians in this world. God has saved us so that we may become part of his body. Therefore, it is so essential that we become members of a local church. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ instructed how to discipline a brother or sister living in sin (Matthew 18:15-18). How can church discipline be done if someone is not a local church member? We also see in the book of Acts that God said that those who believed were added to their number (See Acts 2,4).

In our individualistic societies, we want to do everything independently. We want to achieve personal success. We want to reach our highest potential. This is prevalent in the age that we live in, especially in Western societies, but the body of Christ operates differently. We are all connected to Christ and

connected to each other. And because we are members of Christ and each other, we need to belong to a local church. It is not enough to listen to sermons online or on your phone and know Christians in different organizations and denominations, and churches. That's not what church is about. Yes, we are part of the global community of faith, and we should pray for one another and our brothers and sisters in other countries and churches. Still, our primary responsibility is to a local body, a local church. When Christ told John the apostle to write letters recorded in the book of Revelation, he wrote to individual churches in Asia, and he addressed each church individually.

We are part of the global church and a local church. Membership in a church is essential because when we become members of a local church, we commit to the people in the church. We commit to pray for each other regularly. We commit to love one another, we commit to care for one another, and we commit to encourage each other to grow in the faith.

## **5. The characteristics of the body (Ephesians 4:1-13)**

### **❖ It is invisible and visible**

The church is invisible. By this, we mean that who exactly are included in the church on a global and local scale in this world are only known to God. We have the visible church. The visible church are those people who identify themselves as Christians and are those who are members of different denominations and churches. People in the visible church are those who call themselves Christians. Many of those who call themselves Christians are genuinely Christians. They are born again, and they are genuine members of Christ and his body. But among those who identify and call themselves Christians, we have those who are not truly Christians. We have the tares among the wheat (Matthew 13). We have the goats among the sheep (Matthew 25). We have the wolves in sheep's clothing. But we as humans cannot say with accuracy and certainty who the true Christians exactly are and who the false ones are. We should, as far as we can, only accept into membership those people who have a testimony of faith and bear the fruit of the Spirit to a degree. So, when we say the church is invisible, we say that only God knows the actual number and the real Christians by name. The totality and number of the bride of the church are invisible to us but not to God.

### ❖ It is holy

Because the church has been baptized into the Holy Spirit and has received the Holy Spirit, it is holy. It is sanctified. It is set apart for holy purposes by God, although the church is not sinless and perfect. It is, first of all, counted righteous and perfect and holy because of Christ's righteousness. But the church, having received the Holy Spirit, and every individual member, having received the Spirit by faith, are being sanctified until they reach glory, heaven. The church is holy, set apart, and called out of the world, and she has an obligation to separate herself from the world and bad company and devote herself to good works and holiness. Without holiness, no one will see God (Hebrews 12:14). "Having these promises let us cleanse ourselves of all uncleanness and filthiness of the flesh and the spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 ESV). A true believer cannot remain in the filth of this world.

### ❖ It is universal

We read in Revelation the following:

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9).

When we say the church is universal, we say that a specific ethnic group or culture doesn't have exclusive rights to be God's people. God started with Abraham and the nation of Israel, but his intention has always been to bless all ethnic groups (Gen 12:1-3). Your denomination or your church, your culture, or your language group cannot say the gospel is for us only. Never. Christ came for people of all classes, all languages, all nations, all ethnicities, for all kinds of people. Christ came for women, children, the poor, the rich, the needy, the maimed, the persecuted, and the oppressed. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free. All can come to the living waters of God and receive salvation in Christ (John 7:37-39). At the end of time, we will have a multicultural church

in heaven. We see this already now in this world to a considerable measure. The church is universal. We believe in a holy, universal Church.

❖ It is one

We read in the letter to the Ephesians:

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Even though we see today that churches are divided among themselves over baptism, infant or believers, over church government, over the continuation of sign gifts, like tongues and prophecy, over music styles in the church, over what will and how will things turn out when Christ returns, we are essentially one, because of our spiritual unity with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All true Christians, whether you are Methodist, Anglican, Pentecostal, Baptist, Charismatic or Reformed, are one in the Spirit and because of our union with Christ. Because we believe in Christ, because our sins are forgiven, because we have eternal life, because we are being sanctified, because we know the essential truths of the faith, we are one. We are one in holiness, and we have one hope: the hope of eternal life in Christ. And because we are essentially one, we have to work in our local churches to maintain the unity of our local churches and work to maintain our unity among the global church along essential truths and godly practices.

❖ It is apostolic and prophetic

The church is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles (Ephesians 2:20). The church in Acts devoted themselves to the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42-48). We have the apostles with us today! In the Bible! We have the teaching of the apostles and the prophets. So when we say that the church is apostolic, we are saying that the church is built on the teaching of the apostles and prophets in the Old and New Testaments. Not new prophets and apostles! The church should base its teaching and preaching on what the apostles of the Bible and the prophets taught! So, we are saying that the church is built on the revelation of God in the Scriptures, on truth, objective truth.

❖ It has one confession

1 Corinthians 12:3 says: “Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.”

The true church has one confession: Christ is Lord. Christ is King. Christ is God. And we will submit to Him even if it means we must die. We will obey Him until we die. He is our Master. He is our Ruler. Our allegiance belongs to Him and Him alone.

**6. We all have different gifts and ministries, and activities (we are all unique)**

1 Cor 12:4-6 “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.”

- ❖ There are varieties of gifts
- ❖ There are varieties of service
- ❖ There are varieties of activities
- ❖ They are all empowered by God in everyone

1 Cor 12:7 “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

- ❖ Each one in the body has been given a manifestation of the Spirit
- ❖ Each manifestation of the Spirit is for the common good of the body

1 Cor 12:10 “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”

These varieties of gifts and services, and activities are:

- ❖ empowered by the same Spirit
- ❖ God has apportioned them to each one individually

❖ as He wills (God sovereignly gives as He wants to)

When you take these truths together, you realize that we are not in competition with one another in the body. There should be no jealousy or envy. Each person in the body has a role to play, and God has sovereignly arranged their roles. And these gifts and services, and activities that are going on in the local church and the global church are not going on by the power and abilities of man. The Holy Spirit empowers them. And because the Spirit empowers them, God receives the glory, not the individuals who serve or teach or do things.

### **7. We are members of one another. We are interdependent.**

**Let's reread our text: 1 Corinthians 12:15-26**

15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?

18) But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

19) If all were a single member, where would the body be?

20) As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

21) The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22) On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

23) and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,

24) which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

25) that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

26) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

**The point Paul is making here is simple: the body works together. We are interdependent on one another.**

- ❖ We all need each other
- ❖ We all serve one another
- ❖ We all feel with one another
- ❖ We all belong to one another

Let me attempt to translate this passage in my own words:

Verse 15: if the web designer or painter should say, “Because I am not an evangelist, I do not belong to the body”, that would not make it less a part of the body. And if the administrator or the cleaning lady, or the treasurer should say, “Because I am not a prayer warrior or intercessor or a Sunday School teacher, I do not belong to the body”, that would not make it any less part of the body.

Verse 17: “if the whole body were Sunday School teachers or evangelists, who would do the administration and web designing? If the entire body taught the word of God and did pastoral counselling, who would do maintenance on the building and take care of the electronic equipment and fix our vehicles?”

Now, this is pivotal to understand: but as it is, God arranged the members of the body, (not some or many of them), each one of them as He chose. God has sovereignly decided who needs to be in each local body and who should be in the global body of Christ. He arranged them and put them in the churches as he wanted to. He is in control. We are all there because God has put us there.

Verse 21: my translation: “the evangelist or Bible teacher or Sunday school teacher or Intercessor cannot say to the handyman or the webmaster or electrician or the cleaning lady, “I do not need you”. The music leader or pianist cannot say to the treasurer, “I do not need you.”

Verse 22: my translation: “the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable”. Those who suffer from depression and those who struggle with addiction and those who are good with their hands, and those who are sick, and

elderly are indispensable. We cannot do without them. We need them. They are indispensable.

**Verse 24: God has composed the body, giving honour to those who lack them, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.**

This is an essential part:

God has composed the body. He has arranged the body and each church in a specific way so that there would be no division and that we would care for one another. Jealousy and envy should flee because of how God arranged the body, in other words: so that our love for one another would be evident.

And then: very important: verse 26: “if one member suffers, all suffer together” and “if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”

Here we see the closeness there should be in a local body of believers. We should care and visit and phone and pray and rejoice and weep with one another all the time. The church is not a social club. It's not just there so that we have a set body of beliefs we agree upon, although that's very important, in fact, essential. It's all about being there for one another and praying for one another. It is about togetherness, spending time with one another and listening to one another and weeping with one another and laughing with one another. We are a family. We need to bear with one another. We need to forgive one another and love one another and be patient with one another. This is the message of 1 Corinthians 12.

- ❖ We all need each other
- ❖ We all serve one another
- ❖ We all feel with one another
- ❖ We all belong to one another

Pastor, does your church look like this? Is there that close connectedness? Is there that mutual support and help? Is there that mutual love and feeling for one another?

## **8. We are there for God's glory**

We can ask the question: **but why? Why this body of Christ?**

Why should there be this family? These local families, this global family? This mutual love and care and serving of one another? Why should there be this love amongst us?

Jesus said: “Hereby they will know that you are My disciples, that you love one another” God is glorified when we love one another. God is glorified when we care for and support one another. God is glorified when we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (See John 15:7-12).

The church is the body of Christ. We are called the body of Christ because we are closely connected to Christ. We are the body of Christ to show the love of God to each other and the world so that they may believe in Christ and be saved (John 17:21-23).

## **2. It is word- and Christ centered in its worship**

### **John 4:1-26**

- 1) "Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John
- 2) (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples),
- 3) he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.
- 4) And he had to pass through Samaria.
- 5) So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.
- 6) Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.
- 7) A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."
- 8) (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)
- 9) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)
- 10) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
- 11) The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"
- 12) Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."
- 13) Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,
- 14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- 15) The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."
- 16) Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."
- 17) The woman answered him, "I have no husband."
- Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';
- 18) for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."
- 19) The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

20) Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

21) Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22) You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23) But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

24) God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

25) The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”

26) Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”” (John

## **Introduction**

In this session, we are going to look at the following:

❖ **What is the essence of Biblical worship?**

❖ **What is true Biblical worship?**

❖ **What is the scope of worshipping God?**

❖ **How does the church facilitate worship?**

❖ **Christ-centered and word-centered worship**

### **1. What is the essence of Biblical worship?**

When you read through John 4 and John 3 and other portions of Scripture, you will realize that God wanted to make it clear that Christ is presented in Scripture as The Fountain of Living Water that quenches the spiritual thirst of believers. In John chapter 4, we see this clearly as Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman. In this portion, Jesus said to the woman that if she knew the Gift of God and who He is who is talking to her, she would have asked, and he would have given her water to drink that would forever quench her thirst. When Jesus spoke to her about the Gift of God, He talked about the Gift of the Holy Spirit. We see this truth in John 7:37-39 as well when Jesus said: “if anyone thirsts let him come to Me and drink, and as the Scriptures say, streams of living water

shall flow from him. Then the Scriptures say that Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, which believers would receive.” (John 7:37-39).

Also, in the portion in verse 14, Jesus said:

“but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Also, in John 6:35, Jesus said, “he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” With these promises in Scripture, we can conclude that God presents Himself as the Source of soul satisfaction and that whoever comes to Him and finds satisfaction in Him shall have eternal life.

Reading these Scriptures along with Psalm 36 and Jeremiah 2, I conclude that the essence of worshipping God is being satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ (See the book, “Desiring God” by John Piper). My definition of worshipping God is similar to John Piper’s:

Being satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ through the presence and power and promises of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of Christ in Scripture.

If you read John 3:1-8, you will know that Jesus said to Nicodemus that nobody could enter or see the kingdom of God without being born from the Spirit of God. Jesus also said that the wind blows where it wills, as does the Spirit of God. God regenerates whom he wills. God is sovereign in making people alive spiritually. Jesus then also said in John chapter 4 that those who worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

So we can conclude that because God is Spirit, God must be worshipped by His Spirit alone. Only those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, and only those, can worship God. To worship God authentically, you must be born again. You must be made alive spiritually to worship God. True worshippers must worship God in Spirit and in truth.

So what does it mean to worship God in truth?

Firstly, to worship in truth means it must be real, authentic worship. It must be spiritual. And secondly, it means it must be according to knowledge and understanding. In other words, you must know certain things before you can worship God authentically. You must know who God is! You must know the true God. When you read the gospel of John, you would know that Jesus Christ is God (John 1:1-3). And Jesus Christ is the One who came to reveal God to us. He came to declare God (John 1:18). The evidence of being born again of the Spirit of God is believing in Christ and what He has done to save us on the cross.

When we are born again of the Spirit of God, when we believe the promises of God in Christ to be true, and we know who Jesus is and how the Scriptures reveal Him to us, we worship God truly and authentically. It is when we come to Christ to forgive our sins and when we come to Christ and drink from Him and how God reveals Him in Scripture, and we are satisfied with this revelation, and the presence of God, that we worship God truly and authentically.

## **2. So, true Biblical worship of God is:**

- ❖ In the Spirit (it is spiritual)
- ❖ in truth (with knowledge and understanding)
- ❖ Is being satisfied with Christ (quenching your spiritual thirst)

Also, we say that true worship of God is by faith, not sight. We see this very clearly in the Scriptures. It is not by making pictures of Jesus or by making an image or statue of God and then worshipping God through it. God said in the second commandment that we shall not make an image of God and bow down to it to worship Him. God is infinite and unlimited. And those who worship Him must worship Him, not by pictures of Him, drawings of Him, or statues of Him, but by faith. So, we can say that true worship of God is by faith, by believing in the revelation of God in Christ in the Scriptures. We worship:

- ❖ by faith, not by sight (not by pictures or statues or images)

As we read in John 4, we saw that Jesus made it clear to the Samaritan woman that true worship of God is not centered in a particular place or mountain. The Samaritans in Jesus' day claimed to worship God at the place where Jacob worshipped, at Sychar. They believed that was the place where people could genuinely worship God because that was the place where Jacob worshipped. But the Jews believed that Jerusalem was the place to worship God. God commanded Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem. And it was in Jerusalem where God wanted the Israelites to sacrifice the animals to make atonement for sins.

Then Jesus came on the scene, and as He said in John 1:14, he came to tabernacle among us, dwell among us. He came to make God known. He came to abolish and fulfil all the sacrifices of animals to make atonement for sins. He was the final sacrifice to take our sins away and reconcile us with God. So, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that true worshippers worship God wherever they are because they will glorify God by His Spirit, who is everywhere. So true worship of God takes place in the new temples of God, in the bodies of believers (1 Corinthians 6:12-18). It doesn't only occur in a church building or a specific gathering of believers. It happens wherever people are born again and are satisfied with Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit. True worship:

❖ Is not based in a specific building or place. It is delocalized.

❖ It is from the Jews, from Christ

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "we worship what we know. Salvation comes from the Jews" (John 4:22). This is a crucial thing to remember. God revealed His purposes and will primarily to the Jews and the Israelites. They received the promises and the law and the adoption and the oracles of God (Romans 9:1-5). And the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came from the Jews. Salvation is from the Jews. And we can only truly worship God if we see Him revealed in the Scriptures, in God's word that was revealed to the Jews.

❖ It is for everyone, every ethnic group

But there were people in Jesus' day that believed that the Samaritans could not truly worship God. The Jews despised the Samaritans. They were not full

descendants of the Jews. They were half-bred Jews. The Jews believed God couldn't save other ethnic groups, like the Samaritans or the Greeks. But in this story, God made it clear that Jesus invited the Samaritan, who came from another ethnic group, to drink from the living water. First, she was adulterous; she was a sinner. Secondly, she was a Samaritan. These two things should have disqualified her from salvation, according to the Jews. Samaritan women were not allowed to talk to men. But in this story, it is clear that Jesus made salvation available to all who would repent and believe in Him. Worshipping God is for everyone, regardless of gender, ethnic group or background.

❖ It is deinstitutionalized (no set forms or traditions or rules)

Then, we also see that worship is deinstitutionalized. We see this very clearly in the New Testament. You don't have to belong to a specific institution or church, or ethnic group to worship God. You don't have to wear certain clothes or follow particular rules to worship God. When we read the New Testament, this point becomes obvious. You don't have to be English to worship God. You don't need to sacrifice animals to worship God, as the Jews did in Israel. You don't have to go through a priest to worship God. You don't have to be circumcised to worship God. Nowhere do we see in the New Testament that you have to follow a set form or tradition to worship God. Worship has been swept open for all ethnic groups and people of all backgrounds. All that is required is that you come to Jesus and drink from Him, learn from Him, know Him, and be satisfied with Him. True worship is in Spirit and truth.

The essence of worship is drinking from Christ and being satisfied with Christ (See John 6:35; John 4:14; John 7:37-39). Treasuring God above all else and prizing God above everything and everyone is the essence of worship.

So, to summarize because we are people that consist of minds and hearts and wills, true worship of God is with the mind, by the emotions and by the will. As John Piper, in his book: Expository exaltation, says. Worship is:

- Knowing God (truth) with mind and understanding
- Treasuring and prizing and valuing God(enjoyment) with the emotions (contrition over sin and delight towards God, hating sin)
- Showing God (displaying God) with the deeds and will

### 3. What is the scope of Biblical worship?

If we look at the whole Bible, we see that the whole of life is worship. We worship God with our minds, emotions and heart and with whatever we do.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:30 ESV).

“I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1,2 ESV).

- Whatever we do, say, feel and are, is worship.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites had to bring sacrifices to God and bringing these sacrifices was part of their worship. There were different types of offerings and sacrifices they had to bring. In the first letter of Peter, the church is compared to a building. And all the members of the church to living stones in this building. And then Peter said Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of this building. He is the most critical part. And then he goes on to say that believers, as living stones, must bring spiritual sacrifices to God (1 Peter 2:5).

As we said before, the essence of worship is treasuring God for who He is. It is prizing Christ above all. It is receiving the Holy Spirit. It is being satisfied with all God is for us in Christ Jesus. But worship is more than this. Worship must include going from knowing God, to treasuring God, to showing God’s excellence and worth. If worship doesn’t result in appropriate actions and affections of the heart, it is not true worship.

This is where the spiritual sacrifices come in. We know that the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. No sacrifice is needed anymore to make atonement for sin. But we are still commanded to bring spiritual sacrifices to God. So, let’s look at what God has in mind here:

- Bringing spiritual sacrifices to God (OT and NT)

➤ Presenting a broken heart to God and having sorrow over evil and sinful desires and actions (Psalm 51:17).

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17)

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4 ESV)

➤ Praise and thanksgiving to God. Having joy in God and expressing this with words

“Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High” (Psalm 50:14).

“The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly, I will show the salvation of God!”

“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name” (Hebrews 13:15)

➤ Praying to God is a sacrifice

The prayers of believers are offered before God as a sacrifice.

“And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.” (Revelation

➤ Being generous and showing mercy

Being generous and showing mercy is commanded throughout Scripture. In Hebrews, God said it is a sacrifice.

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” (Hebrews 13:12?)

➤ Bringing people to Christ

Paul, the apostle, describes his work for the Lord in bringing people to God as a sacrifice and offering to God.

“But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.” (Romans 15:17?).

**4. How does the local church facilitate worship?**

We have established in the previous sections that worship is about knowing God, treasuring God and showing God. We also saw that worshipping God is about offering spiritual sacrifices to God. Worship is about everything we do and say and feel. All of life is worship.

So, the question is, why do we need to come together as a body of believers and worship together? Why can't we just worship at our homes with our families and friends? Why do we need to come together and worship God together?

First of all, we have to say that it is commanded by Scripture that we ought not to stay at home and worship there only. Listen to the book of Hebrews:

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:12,13 ESV).

We come together for mutual encouragement so that the deceitfulness of sin may not harden our hearts.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24,25 ESV).

This text shows us that we should come together to stir up one another to love and do good works and to encourage each other.

Secondly, we must remember that as a church, we are part of one another. We are part of the same family. We are members of the same body. In short, we need each other. We were not created and saved to live on our own, in our own cocoon. The eye cannot say to the ear, “I have no need of you!” The foot cannot say to the mouth, “I don’t need you.” (1 Cor 12:1-28).

Thirdly, we are commanded in Scripture to come together because when we come together in our gatherings at a local church, the elements of worship are all present. When we come together, we come together to know God better, treasure Him better, and show Him to each other. We come together to bring spiritual sacrifices corporately and experience the dynamics of the family of God.

Our worship services on weekdays and on Sundays focus on:

❖ Praising and thanksgiving (delight in God) heart and mind (we worship God with our hearts and minds; (Colossians 3:16,17; Ephesians 5:18,19).

❖ Bringing people to contrition and confession (heart and mind) through the preaching of the word (1 John 1:7-9; Acts 2:10-41)

❖ Reading and preaching and expounding the Word (the mind) (Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:13)

❖ Prayers and intercession (for other people) (1 Timothy 2:1-2,8; Acts 2:42)

❖ The correct administration of sacraments (to strengthen faith)

(Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:18-20)

❖ Bringing people to Christ (deeds) preaching  
(2 Timothy 4:1-7; Acts 2:42-47)

❖ Helping people to be generous (tithes and offerings; deeds)  
(1 Corinthians 16:2; Romans 12:9-16; 2 Corinthians 8,9).

By bringing spiritual sacrifices to God corporately, we help each other worship God. And this worship is not focused on us or our clothing or on making our gatherings as comfortable as possible. They should be focusing on the Word of God, on truth. They are based on truth because we cannot worship God authentically if we don't know God. Therefore, we must make the word of God, the reading of the Scriptures and the preaching of the Scriptures the main thing in the gatherings of believers. It is when we understand the Scriptures and when we see Christ in the Scriptures, and when Christ is the focus of our worship that we worship in Spirit and truth. The Holy Spirit points us to Christ (John 16:13,14)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me (Christ), for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13,14 ESV).

When we know the Scriptures and when we see the glory of Christ in the Scriptures, the word of truth, treasure and esteem Christ above all else, and show Christ to the world and each other, genuine, authentic worship takes place. Worship is not only a private affair. It is a corporate affair; it is a family affair.

The local church, therefore, becomes the place where authentic worship should be facilitated by our minds and hearts and deeds as we behold the glory of Christ in the Scriptures and as we adore Christ in singing. May God help us to worship Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, authentically when we come together as a family and wherever we are in the body. May we indeed be temples of the Holy Spirit.

## **5. Christ-centered and Word-centered worship**

So, when we talk about the fact that one of the features of a Biblical church is Christ-centered and word-centered worship, we are saying that Christ should be the focus of our worship and the word of God should be our focus. As we saw in this session, true worship is in truth and in spirit. And if it is in truth, it must be based on a correct understanding of who God is. And if it is based on a correct understanding of who God is, it must be based on the revelation of God in the Bible.

The Word of God should therefore be the center point of our worship. We cannot worship who we do not know. We are not saying emotions are unimportant, but they are based on truth and the work of the Spirit.

So, we are saying that worship is not:

### **❖ Worship is not entertainment orientated or centered**

We don't worship God because it is a fun thing to do. Our worship services are not about singing performances. It's not about who has the most incredible dance moves. It's not about who can shout the loudest or make the biggest noise. It's not about a show. It's not about flashing lights and smoke coming from behind the pulpit. It's not about which preacher has the most outstanding pictures on their PowerPoint presentations that emphasize their points the best.

We don't come together on a Sunday to be entertained. We come to know God better and to express our worship by listening to His word. Knowing Him better is our focus so that we can love Him more and show Him better to the world. We are not saying that we shouldn't enjoy God in our singing. We should enjoy God. We should treasure Him above all else. But we don't come to church to see what a loud noise we can make as the world does. That is not why we worship. We are not there to outdo the world.

Worship is not a performance. It's not about us; it's about God and his glory.

### **❖ Worship is not seeker-sensitive and seeker-friendly**

Many churches are attempting everything in their power to make seekers as comfortable as possible. We call them seeker-friendly and seeker-sensitive churches. The goal in these churches is that we shouldn't say or do anything that would upset unbelievers or believers. Many churches that are seeker sensitive don't call people to repentance. They don't want to call certain sins evil and wrong. They think that if we call people to turn from their sins, they won't return to church. Their philosophy is not to offend anybody. They make sure the chairs are comfortable enough, with soft cushions or even heating under the seats. These things are not necessarily wrong. But what we see in these churches is that they have strayed from the primary objective of the church: and that is to make Christ look great, not their church building. They have lost the objective of preaching the undiluted gospel and holding nothing back from the whole counsel of God. They scratch the itching ears of the seekers so they can return and give more money to the church. They are not Word-centered nor Christ-centered. They have become man centered.

❖ Worship is not a business meeting, not business orientated or centered

Many churches in the world have become nothing else than a business. They have built their ministries and churches around personalities and money. Church has become a way to finance everything the pastor wants so that he can travel as much as he wants. The church doesn't live by faith. Churches compete with one another to become bigger and better with more advanced facilities. Many aim to expand, but they are there to become an enormous empire. Loyalty to Christ isn't there anymore. Commitment to the church has replaced loyalty to Christ. If we look at the Roman Catholic Institution, which is called a "church," we see this. They have disregarded many of the clear teachings of Scripture and invented teachings that are not Biblical. But they have advanced across the globe. They have lost the purity of the gospel.

But as an organization, the Roman Catholic "church" has expanded worldwide. Many churches are in this unfortunate position. Over many decades and even years, they have gained many properties and buildings, and financially they have got it made. But in the process, they have lost their first love, and they have compromised with the world not to be persecuted. The local church is not there to make a profit. The local church is not a business. They aim to advance the kingdom of God through being faithful to Christ and His Word. If

preaching the word of God and following Christ is not the center of the church, the church has ceased to become a Biblical Church. The Biblical church is:

- ❖ Not centered on sacraments (sacramentalism), ceremonies (ceremonialism) or sacrifices (sacraficialism; The Mass)
- ❖ Not centered on singing and dancing
- ❖ Not centered on healings, prophecies, dreams and visions
- ❖ Not centered in a specific building or location or forms and traditions, it is delocalized and deinstitutionalized (John 4:14-28)
- ❖ Not by images or set forms (dancing, raising hands or sitting still are determined by culture and context)
- ❖ Not centered on the Holy Spirit but empowered by the Spirit
- ❖ Christ is the focus; the Holy Spirit always points to Christ
- ❖ The word of God is the focus, knowing God

### **Resources on Worship:**

1. Piper, John, Expository Exultation, (2018), Crossway
2. Ryle, J.C. Worship, It's priority, principles and practice. (2005), The Banner of Truth Trust

### **3. It has the 66 books of the Bible as its foundation**

“You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:10-17 ESV).

### **Introduction (Origin of the Bible)**

The Bible is not just words about God; it’s not just a witness to God’s words. It’s not primarily a human book. It is for humans, but it is primarily God’s book to humans. There is no book like it in the world. No other book in the history of the world has been sold so many times as the Bible. No other book in the world has been translated into so many languages. More people have died because of this book than any other book. People around the world are right now being persecuted because of this book. It is illegal to have this book in many countries. Because it is God’s book to humans, it is the most important book in the world.

- It is a light for those who are living in the darkness of their sin
- It is an anchor for your soul when life tosses you here and there, and you are confused and restless
- It is the sword of the Spirit to pierce the darkness
- It is a hammer to break the stony heart and the hardened heart in sin
- It is a compass to show you the right direction to take in life
- It is more precious than gold and silver and all the treasures in the world
- It is sweeter than honey to the soul
- It is living water that satisfies the soul with good things

- It is the bread of life that satisfies the hungry soul
- It quickens the dead soul and revives the weary heart
- It creates faith and builds believers up to the most holy faith
- It comforts and encourages and edifies
- It warns of eternal judgement to come
- The words contained in it will judge the living and the dead
- The promises therein give hope for this life and the next
- It will never be destroyed and be proven to be false
- It leads to the Savior of the world, who is called the Word

The Bible doesn't consist of words that originated with man mixed with words that originated with God. The totality of the Bible is God's words in human language. By this, we mean God superintended and was in control of every book and every sentence and every word when it was written while at the same time never overriding nor destroying the unique personalities of the authors.

While the totality of the Bible is God's words, God used humans, his people, with their unique personalities and literary styles, to write down His words. Although the secondary authors, God's people, wrote the words of God, the primary author was God. Without God inspiring and moving the authors to write, there would be no book in the Bible and no Bible. So, we can say that the Bible is God's Book written primarily by God while using human instruments and human authors like you use a pen when writing in a book. If you write in a book, you are in absolute control. The pen writes precisely as you would want it to write and in the style you want it to write. Although humans wrote the words of God, God superintended the whole process; every word, every sentence, and every paragraph were written, and the exact words were written exactly as God wanted them to be written down. And because God is the primary author of every book and every paragraph and every sentence and every word, we can trust the Bible and believe the Bible and must accept it as God's words to us. Although God is the primary author of the Bible, we believe in the organic inspiration theory of the Bible, which means God did not override the unique personalities and styles of writing of the human authors when they wrote scripture.

In this study, we are going to look at the following:

- The purposes of the Scriptures
  - The clarity of the Scriptures
  - The sufficiency of the Scriptures
  - The authority of the Scriptures
  - The trustworthiness and truthfulness or inerrancy of the Scriptures
  - The necessity of the Scriptures
  - The consequences of believing and living the Bible
  - The significance and relevance of the Bible for the local church
  - Why these 66 books?
  - The importance of studying Systematic theology and Biblical theology
- What are the purposes of the Scriptures?

To make one wise (2 Timothy 3:15). The sacred writings impart wisdom to the foolish. It's about revelation. It's about disclosing facts and events that happened in history we need to know. It's about things that were hidden. The scriptures are about imparting information, true information, not deceptions, about what humans need. The Bible is there to make us wise! This begs the question! Wise about what? Wise about farming? Wise about how to make food? How to build a house? How to get and maintain a job? How to be a good doctor? No, not at all! It helps us how to be wise about salvation!

To make one wise for salvation. So, when we talk of salvation, we must ask ourselves: what is salvation all about? What do we need to be saved from? If we need to be saved from something or someone, we know we are in danger! The Bible makes it clear we need to be saved from God's judgment. We need to be saved from God's wrath! So why is God angry with us?

We have sinned! We have rebelled! We have disobeyed his commands!

So, when we speak about salvation, we immediately think that we have done things wrong and deserve judgment from God. But more than that, we are evil and sinful by nature. When we talk about judgment, we must think of moral absolutes. There are things in the world and the way God made us that are right and wrong; otherwise, there would be no judgment and no need for salvation. So, when we say that the sacred writings are able to make us wise unto

salvation, we immediately have to acknowledge that we have a need. We are in danger and know there are moral absolutes. If there is no absolute wrong and right, there would be no need for salvation and no threat of judgement. So, the Bible is about escaping God's judgment, and it is about getting into a place of safety. It's about being secure. It's about being protected and saved from God's wrath and sin. Further on in our text, we see where we do find salvation. We find it in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of the sacred writings is to make us wise for salvation in Christ Jesus. The holy scriptures make it clear that the place of safety and security and protection and salvation is found in Christ Jesus. It's about the revelation of a Person, Christ Jesus. He is the sacred writing's grand theme, its primary revelation. All the streams of the Scriptures flow to this vast ocean. God has given no other Name, Person, under Heaven among men, by which we must be saved; this Name is Christ Jesus (Acts 4:12). There is one God and one Mediator among men by which we must be saved (1 Timothy 2:3,4). The grand theme of the scriptures is the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Now, we may ask how do we get salvation in Christ? Do we have to swim across the ocean? Do we need to climb up to heaven? Do we need to climb the highest mountain or get university degrees? Our text says:

The sacred scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through FAITH in Christ Jesus.

The sacred writings were given to create and build faith in Christ unto salvation! The way we get this salvation is not by human effort, education, acquiring degrees, or doing some great thing, or achieving some great heroic act, or giving all our possessions to the poor. No, not at all! It is by believing in Christ Jesus! It's by believing in what the sacred writings reveal about Christ. By believing in what the sacred writings reveal is how we escape judgment and sin. So, the sacred writings are about the creation and building of faith in this Person, Christ Jesus.

So how is faith built and created? Through knowing the words of truth, revealed in the scriptures, about Christ Jesus!

So, Paul is commanding Timothy in our text to continue in what he has learned and known from early childhood and recognize from whom he has learned it (2 Timothy 3:14)! So, Timothy should take heed of what he has learned from Paul the apostle and the Scriptures, in other words.

But Paul is not stopping here. He goes on to say and clarify unto us other purposes of the Scriptures:

All of Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

So, the Scriptures are not just about receiving salvation in Christ and believing in Christ. It's about making distinctions between righteousness and unrighteousness. It's about receiving salvation, it's about believing in Christ, but it's also about knowing how to live righteously and in a godly manner. Before living right, you must know what is right and wrong in God's eyes. The Scriptures have been given to us by God! The Scriptures help us distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, and truth and falsehood. It's about giving us information, about giving knowledge about righteousness.

But then it goes on to say that it has been given to train and equip the man of God in righteousness, that he might be thoroughly equipped for every good work! So the Bible is not only there to show us the right way, to help us to live righteously, but to thoroughly equip the man of God for every good work. None left out! The sacred writings are there to make us useful and profitable for others for the good of the world. To train us and teach us for every good work. The sacred writings are there to equip and train the saved ones, to be good and to do good.

So, to summarize: the Purposes of the Scriptures are to:

- show us that we are sinners, that we stand guilty before God, and that we are in danger of eternal judgement
- Make the way of salvation known in Christ Jesus
- It's about building faith in people to know about salvation and receive salvation in Christ
- It's about Christ Jesus and his glory

- They are there to train and teach us towards righteousness, living righteously and godly
- They are there to equip us wholly and thoroughly for every good work (It is complete). Nothing else is needed for this task.

So, with these Scriptures, we can deduce the following:

### The Scriptures are clear:

Firstly, from our text, we see that Paul says that the sacred writings are able to make one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. If the Scriptures can make one wise, then we can conclude that the Scriptures are clear enough to make one wise. We can say we believe in the clarity of Scripture. Although many things in Scripture are difficult to understand, we can say that there are enough things in Scripture to make us wise so that we may be saved! In other words, you don't have to be a theological student to know the way of salvation or a university professor! You must believe like a child! In fact, the things that we need to know about God and salvation are so clear and easy to understand that a child can receive salvation. This means that children ought to be taught the things written in the Scriptures so they may be saved and live righteously. Because the scriptures are clear, the church is not just for adults or those who can understand the book of Romans. The Scriptures come to us in narratives, mainly for a reason. So that the primitive and the intellectual can grasp and understand the same scriptures. The fact that the Scriptures are clear in what they teach doesn't mean we should not study them. It is clear, but it is still like a gold mine. There is always more to discover! More to understand!

### The Scriptures are sufficient.

They are able to train us in righteousness and equip us thoroughly for every good work! So, if the BIBLE is able to equip us not just for some or many good works, or a vast some of good works, but every good work, we must say that this body of Scriptures is sufficient for the purposes they were given. The reasons or purposes of the existence of the Scriptures are to do a thorough job. In other words, if it is able to make one wise for salvation, live a righteous life and train people towards every good work, then you cannot add to this body of Scriptures that will help you to do a better job, a more thorough job! That is

why we say, and the Bible says, we cannot and should not add to these Scriptures! Many books can be helpful in understanding the scriptures, but no book and no writing are in the same category as the Scriptures. In Proverbs 30:7, it says we should not add to his words. Revelation 22 says we should not add to Scripture nor take anything from it, not only the book of Revelation.

### The Scriptures are authoritative.

But why are the sacred Scriptures in this class of its own? The answer we find in 2 Timothy 3:16 is. “All of Scripture is breathed out by God.” The primary author is God, not man. It comes from God, from the Holy Spirit, and because it comes from God, it is true, and there is no deceit in it.

Forever your word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89 ESV)

Your word is purified seven times (Psalm 12:6 ESV)

Your word is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing...revealing the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 ESV)

Your word is truth (John 17:17 ESV)

Your word is spirit and life (John 6:68 ESV)

By the living word of God, we are born again (See 1 Peter 1:23-25 ESV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but God’s word will never pass away (Matthew 24:36 ESV)

God will judge the world by his word (See John 5)

The Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:33 ESV)

We can therefore say because it comes from God, it has more authority than all the other books in the world. It is authoritative. Because it is God’s words, there is no authority above it. God is Creator, Savior and Judge. The words did

not originate in the minds of men. Men wrote these words as God moved them (2 Peter 1:21,22).

### The Scriptures are trustworthy and truthful.

Because the Scriptures come from God, they are true and should be trusted. The Scriptures themselves say that God cannot lie (Read Numbers 23:19). And if we have such a body of writings to be found coming from God, we must say everything contained in it is true in all it affirms. Therefore, we believe the Bible is inerrant, truthful and trustworthy. And therefore, what the Bible reveals and affirms should be believed. We must be careful here that we understand the inerrancy of Scripture in the right way. We find in the Bible things that you may think cannot be true. When it speaks about the sun having a circuit around the earth (Psalm 19:1-6) and the world standing on its pillars (1 Samuel 2), and the fact that God killed exactly 180 000 people (Jeremiah 36,37). When we speak about inerrancy, we are not talking about numerical accuracy or exact scientific observations. Although the Bible is not a scientific handbook, it is not inaccurate when discussing science or history. The Scriptures are accurate and can be trusted in what they affirm about God and man and history and salvation and science and God's purposes and plans and judgment to come and about right and wrong. Some parts of the Bible deals with poetry. So, a metaphor is not to be taken literally. A parable is a parable and not be seen as history. History is to be believed as history, and so on. The Bible is to be believed and trusted in what it affirms to be true and right and good.

Eight reasons why you can trust the Bible:

- ❖ The Scriptures claim to be coming from God hundreds of times
- ❖ Hundreds of prophecies have come to fulfilment, more than 300 in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ
- ❖ They have authenticity, in themselves, the Holy Spirit testify in the hearts of those who read it to be true and right and good
- ❖ They convict of sin, judgment and righteousness when you read them
- ❖ They change the lives of those who study and believe and obey them
- ❖ They have an inner consistency and corresponding unity (no real contradiction) between the Old and New Testaments

- ❖ Archeological and scientific facts confirm the truth of the Bible
- ❖ They have literary integrity

### The Scriptures are necessary.

History confirms the truth that if God had not preserved for us a book and inspired human authors to write down his words, we would have served and worshipped idols as the rest of humanity without this revelation. We see in the ancient east that all the cultures worshipped false gods, from the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Amorites, the Chinese, Africans, the Incas, and Bushmen, and we can go on and on. Any civilization and culture untouched by the Jewish Scriptures or the Christian Scriptures has turned to idol-, man and nature worship. There is no exception. Do a study of history, and you will see this fact. Go to any culture where the people don't have the Scriptures available to them, and you will see a culture that worships nature, idols and humanity. God, in his mercy, has decided to inspire human writers to write down his words and to act and to work out his plan of salvation through Abraham and the nation of Israel. He moved human writers to write down his words and made known his plan of salvation in Christ. If God did not act and save us and then used people to write down his words, the whole world would be enslaved to idols and their sinful natures. Therefore, in the local church, we need a body of truth, revelation from God, that we know comes from God to guide us into all the truth so that we may know what is right and true and good.

### The consequences of believing the Scriptures and living righteously

Then Paul goes on to say what the consequences will be in believing the (Bible) words of God and living righteously and training men to do so. Persecution.

Everyone who desires to live a godly life will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12 ESV).

Paul was persecuted. Christians in the early church were persecuted. Christians throughout history were persecuted. Christians today are persecuted. Friends of mine in Nigeria, Kenya and all over the world are persecuted. Paul said everyone who desires to live a godly life will be persecuted. We must be aware of this.

## The significance of the Bible and what it reveals for the local church.

Because the Bible is the word of God and because there is no authority above it, what it teaches, and what it affirms has relevance for us today and every generation of mankind. It is never outdated; it is always relevant because it deals with what is right and wrong, true and false. It deals with living right and godly, and it is the perfect guide to salvation. Whatever the Bible says about marriage, divorce, government and preaching, family life, employment, church government, sexuality, entertainment, and rest are binding on our consciences because it is what God says.

It is, therefore, the foundation on which the church is built because, in it, God's will is revealed to human beings.

This Book is, therefore, the foundation on which the church is built.

“So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20 ESV).

1 Corinthians 3:10 reveals to us that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church and each individual Christian.

All of Scripture is about Jesus Christ, not only select portions in the Old Testament and the New Testament

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39 ESV).

1 Peter 2:3 reveals that Christians are living stones in this building called the church, Jesus Christ being the Chief cornerstone

Now I want to turn to the following question:

What Scriptures? Why do we say only these 66 books?

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he mentioned that he was acquainted with the sacred writings. So, in Paul's day, there was a body of sacred writings. Then Paul also says that he (Timothy) must remember the things he was taught and from whom he was taught. Now here Paul is referring not only to the sacred writings but also to himself, who was an apostle. In 2 Peter 3:15-17 Peter, the apostle, referred to some people twisting Paul's writings as they do the other Scriptures. So, Peter, an apostle, recognized that Paul's writings were Scripture. I do not intend to fully explain why the 66 books we have today are called the scriptures. I can give you some good resources to investigate. (F.F Bruce, the Canon of Scripture).

### Just a few conclusions:

- ❖ The Jewish Scriptures today are precisely the same as our Old Testament. In Paul's day, these were viewed as "The Scriptures". These 39 books. The Torah (5 books of Moses, The Former Prophets (from Joshua to Chronicles, the latter Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi) and the Writings (Psalm to Job).
- ❖ The New Testament writings were all written by an apostle, or under the direction of an apostle or in close connection to an apostle (Luke with Paul, Mark with Peter etc.
- ❖ No book was included in the New Testament that was not written while one of the apostles was still alive. After the apostolic era ceased, no more Scriptures were written.
- ❖ The church only recognized the 27 books to be authoritative; they did not authorize them themselves to be Scripture.
- ❖ The 27 books in the New Testament, as the Old Testament Canon, have the authenticity in themselves to be God's words. They are self-authenticating.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit led and guided the early church to accept the 27 books to be authoritative.
- ❖ The church father Athanasius, in AD367, made the list of the New Testament Scriptures, which the early church accepted

### The importance, therefore, of studying Systematic Theology

#### What is systematic theology?

The Bible reveals truths about God, the nature of God, the attributes of God, the works of God in nature and redemption. The Bible reveals things about humanity, the nature of sin, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit, the church, the end times and God's purposes, and many other themes. Because God is a God of truth and because there are moral absolutes, we can conclude that God won't contradict himself. If the truth cannot be found and if there is no right and wrong and sin, then life is meaningless, and we can know nothing for sure. But because God has revealed Himself in what he has made, and because he has revealed Himself in the Bible, what we call special revelation, we can know things to be true and real and right.

Systematic theology studies the great truths and themes of the Bible. It summarizes and puts the truth about God and salvation and creation and so on together. It systematizes truth, so we can understand the things revealed to us by God.

### Why study it?

- ❖ We study the Bible to make sense of and gain an understanding of God, man, sin, Christ, God's purposes and plans, salvation, judgment and what is to come.
- ❖ We study the Bible to know God's mind on different topics and about reality.
- ❖ Systematic theology is important because when studying themes and topics in the Bible, we can know God better, love God better and serve God and people better.
- ❖ Systematic theology helps you to know the Bible better so that you can please God better and not be confused about what God thinks and how God wants you to be and behave.
- ❖ Systematic Theology helps you to think like God thinks about prayer, about Christ, about tomorrow, about the future, about the world, about work, and how to live in this world etc. What we know affects everything we do. What we believe and think affects how we behave. Systematic theology is about knowing the mind of Christ.

## The importance of Biblical Theology

### What is Biblical theology?

Biblical theology is about learning about the details of every book in the Bible. If every book in the Bible is God's word, his authoritative word, we ought to know why each one is there. Why did God want Job and Revelation, and Proverbs in the Bible? Each book has a specific message. Each book has particular themes. Each book was written at a particular time and for a specific audience, although they were written for humans of all ages. They are like pieces of a puzzle that fit into a jigsaw puzzle. Each book fits into God's story in the whole of the Bible for specific reasons.

Biblical theology deals with the Bible at a microscopic level. But each book relates to the great themes and message of the Bible. Each book is about God, about man, about sin, about God's purposes and plans and about God's way of salvation and righteousness and judgement. And because each book is about God's plan of salvation, each book is about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

In the Bible, we find that God's revelation about Himself and humanity is progressive. We don't understand all at once. Each book builds upon the previous ones. And when you come to the end of the New Testament, you see the entire plan of salvation unfolded, and you have sufficient information about God and man and the world.

### Why study it?

- ❖ In studying each book in the Bible, you get to know God better.
- ❖ In studying each book, you get to know God's plans and purposes and will better. You get a clearer view of God and his will.
- ❖ In studying each book, you come to appreciate the realities of God's judgement on sin, the final judgment and the seriousness of sin. You learn why you should fear God.
- ❖ In studying each book of the Bible, you learn not to take Scriptures out of context and teach heresy.

- ❖ In studying each book of the Bible, you learn why God inspired that book and why that book is relevant to us today.
- ❖ In studying each book, you appreciate the corresponding unity and the internal consistency between the Old and New Testaments and how no Scripture contradicts other Scriptures.

### **Resources on the Bible**

1. F.F Bruce, the Canon of Scripture,
2. Piper, John, a Peculiar Glory, How the Christian Scriptures reveal its complete truthfulness (2016)
3. Edwards, Brian, Why 66? The New Answers Book 2, Master Books (2008)
4. Sproul, R.C, Can we trust the Bible?, Reformation Trust (2009)
5. Spurgeon, C.H, The Bible, Chapel Library, (2002)
6. Jones, T.P, Why Trust the Bible, Rose Publishing, (2007)
7. Comfort, Ray, Scientific Facts in the Bible, Bridge Logos, (2001)
8. Wayne Grudem, An Introduction to Systematic Theology, IntersVarsity Press (1994)
9. Vos, Gerhardus, Biblical Theology, Eerdmans Publishing, (1948)
10. Berkhof, Louis, Systematic Theology, Banner of Truth Trust (1958)

#### **4. It is Gospel-driven in all its activities**

Romans 1:16,17 “I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes, for in it the righteousness of God has been revealed.” (Romans 1:16,17 ESV).

This session is about knowing the gospel clearly or getting the gospel right and then communicating it clearly in different settings, repeatedly, with passion. The whole church falls or stands on the facts of the gospel and what the gospel creates. Our hope as Christians depends on getting the gospel right. There is nothing more important for the life of the church than the gospel. If we get the gospel wrong, everything else will be wrong. The gospel is the sun around which all the planets revolve. Without the sun, everything is out of place. Without the sun, there is no life and no light. Without Christ and the gospel, there is no spiritual life or light.

Paul told the Galatian believers that if anyone preached another gospel, let him be accursed (Gal 1:5-10). When it comes to the gospel, the salvation and damnation of people are at stake. And the church is the protector of the gospel. The church is the proclaimer of the gospel. The local church is the place where the gospel is proclaimed, where we find the people that know the gospel and have a passion for the gospel. It all depends on the gospel. It is through the gospel that we are saved and strengthened and sanctified (1 Cor 15:1-2). So, when we say that the Biblical church is gospel-driven in all its activities, we are saying the following:

❖ It's not program-driven; the gospel should drive programs within the church.

There is nothing wrong with a church having programs. Programs help us to structure activities. There is nothing wrong with Seminars and Conferences of various sorts. But the Biblical church is not program-driven but gospel-driven. The gospel should drive all the programs of the church. The activities of the church should be affected by the gospel, but also every activity should lead to the gospel. There would be no program in the church unless the gospel created it. By that, I mean the people in the church have been created by the gospel.

They are there because the gospel has saved them. So whatever program we are involved in at the church, the gospel should be at the center.

❖ It's not entertainment-driven

Some churches are more into entertaining the people than feeding them with the word. The programs in the church should be there to help and challenge and convict sinners and to encourage them for the gospel. All the activities are there to awaken a passion for the gospel and to help people see the value and excellence of Christ and the gospel. We are not man-centered but gospel-centered. We want people to have a passion for Christ and the gospel and what the gospel creates—the church and the kingdom of righteousness. The gospel is about the revelation of righteousness and the pursuit of righteousness.

❖ It's not profit-driven

To be profit-driven is the antithesis of being gospel-driven. The gospel has been given to show us spiritual realities, God, righteousness, salvation, and so on, and they are more important than money. Riches will come and go. We should not build our trust on money. Churches that make money and profit their aim have lost the meaning of being a church. The church is about making God look great, not possessions. The church should be about treasuring Christ, not possessions and money.

❖ It's not focusing on building super-structures, church buildings

So, if the church is not about money, it's not about building big churches or structures. The church is not about building earthly empires. It's not about looking good from the outside; it's about the inner life with God. The beauty and glory that the gospel creates are gospel communities that love and care for each other and pursue holiness. The church is about exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. The church is about the gospel that creates people that exhibit Christ to each other and the world.

❖ It is not miracle driven

Some churches and people think unless people are being healed and miracles are taking place, they are not preaching the true gospel. They want healing, demons cast out, and miracles to occur, like in the days of Jesus and the apostles. But we have to ask, why were these taking place? Was it not to authenticate the Lord Jesus as the Messiah and the apostles to be apostles? Healings and miracles are not impossible in times of revival or the life of the church, but the Biblical church is not after sensation but after the salvation of souls. The healing of souls is more important than the healing of bodies. Many who were healed by Jesus were not saved spiritually. The soul must have precedence when it comes to the church, not to say that the body is unimportant, but the gospel deals primarily with the saving of the soul; the glorification of the body comes later.

❖ It's not performance driven

Many Christians and religious people think that God will accept them if they reach a certain standard in their Christian life. They believe that if they achieve enough or do enough good works, it provides the basis for God to accept them. In other words, they think they stand acceptable in God's sight because they obey God's commands. This is moralism and what the Pharisees believed. Being performance-driven is the antithesis of being gospel-driven.

❖ What does it mean to be gospel-driven?

It means the gospel (Christ) should be at the center of all the activities because the gospel is about salvation and exalting Christ. To be driven by the gospel means the church exists to win souls for God and build them up by the gospel. To be gospel-driven means to be Christ-driven, kingdom-driven, and driven to bring glory to God. To be gospel-driven means, you are driven to know Christ and make Him known. Is this what your church is all about?

Being gospel-driven means, you get your identity and self-worth and sense of acceptance from God, not by doing good works or by your performance or by the level of individual success or corporate success but through the gospel. By faith in Christ, by grace, by the performance and achievements of Christ, we are accepted by God. When we know that God fully accepts us through the finished work of Christ and by His perfect record, his righteousness, that counts

as ours, and that God views us if we are Christ, we are gospel-driven. Then we do all our activities in the church not to gain acceptance from God because we are already accepted by the gospel.

❖ The gospel is essential in building up the church

The gospel is not just there so that people can get saved. This is obvious. The church is built up and strengthened by the gospel. We never outgrow the gospel. The gospel is not just for the elementary level of Christianity. It's for the primary, secondary, tertiary, bachelor, honors, master, doctoral- and professorial levels until you die.

Because we so quickly think that we need to perform to be accepted in this world, we believe it works like this with God as well. We need to be reminded repeatedly that we are saved by grace, not by our obedience to the law, not by our performance, not by our own righteousness. When we fully comprehend this, we are free to live for God and serve others passionately, knowing that all is of grace.

The two great disasters we as churches must avoid are legalism and lawlessness. Or moralism on the one side and relativism on the other. Both evils will prove to be disastrous for a church. We see examples of these two things over and over in the gospels. John 3,4. In John 3, we see Nicodemus, the Pharisee and in John 4, the immoral woman. Both need the gospel. In Luke 7 and Luke 18, we see these contrasts as well. In Luke 7 and Luke 18, it is both the sinners that accept the gospel more readily. It is the Pharisees, the legalists, that are harder to reach because they rely on their own righteousness.

❖ Which activities should be gospel-driven?

- Preaching
- Sunday School
- Comprehensive outreach (evangelism)
- Praise and worship
- Counselling sessions
- Bible studies

- Fellowship meetings (formal and informal)
- House-visitations
- Prayer meetings

❖ The church should have a burden to do comprehensive evangelism of the lost

❖ The Biblical church practices evangelizing the lost; they don't just discuss it. The church that doesn't evangelize will fossilize.

### What is the gospel?

#### **The gospel of God**

While Jesus Christ was on this earth, He began His public ministry with the words: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 ESV).

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16,17 ESV).

The word gospel means “good news”, and in the context of the Bible, it means “the good news of God to the world.” You will not see the good news of God as good at all unless you know of the plight of your soul before God. We have a great need before God. We sinned against God, and we stand guilty before him. Our natures are corrupt. We have wicked hearts. We have done evil, and therefore we deserve God's judgement. We deserve to go to hell because we are evil and stand guilty before God. Before people will appreciate the gospel, they have to see their desperate need for a Savior!

The first four books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are called the four gospels. They are orderly accounts of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what He did and said while he lived on this earth. We can say that they give us different angles or portraits of the truth

of Jesus Christ. Just as four different painters who draw the same landscape or mountain would capture different truths about the particular mountain or landscape. Hence, each writer of the four gospels captured different facts and emphasized different truths about the Person and work of Jesus Christ. All four gospels reveal truth about Jesus Christ, His Person and His work on earth. The gospel deals with the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The gospel deals with redemption accomplished through Christ and His redemption applied through the Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In the letters of Paul in the New Testament, we get a more precise focus on the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some Biblical scholars differentiate between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of salvation in the New Testament and the letters of Paul. The gospel of the kingdom, they say, deals with the rule and authority of Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation deals with how God saves people from their sins. I will not differentiate between these two aspects in the gospel but treat them as one because both Bible themes come together in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

The Bible makes it clear that it is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). It is through the word of God the gospel being preached (1 Corinthians 1:18), which is the word of truth, that people are saved from their sins and are born again by the Holy Spirit. People cannot be saved from the wrath of God and their sins by mere education or doing good works or being baptized, or just confessing their sins to God. There needs to be a power encounter with God in the Holy Spirit whereby people hear the truth of the gospel and believe the truth of the gospel. I will elaborate on this truth later. Peter, the apostle, said:

“Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the *good news* that was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23-25 ESV).

**Here is a Biblical definition of the gospel of God:**

- 1) God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, into this world, to Israel, as prophesied in the Scriptures, in history about 2000 years ago.
- 2) He was miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary, his earthly mother.
- 3) Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh, in human form. He was also truly a human being who was tired and hungry and sad, as all humans are. He had a real human nature.
- 4) He lived a blameless, sinless life, fulfilled the righteousness of the law on behalf of his people, and exhibited the righteousness and nature of God perfectly.
- 5) He died a substitutionary death on behalf of His people, satisfied the justice of God (the just requirement of the law), and absorbed and set aside God's wrath on behalf of His people.
- 6) After three days, He physically rose from the dead and thereby conquered the power of death, Satan, sin and sinful human nature. God vindicated Jesus Christ by raising Him from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and declared Him to be the Son of God.
- 7) After 40 days after His death, Jesus ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father while all authority in heaven and earth was given unto Him.
- 8) Everyone who repents of their sins and believes in the Person of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary death (finished work), receiving Him as Lord and Savior and Righteousness, will be reconciled to God,
- 9) will be given the Holy Spirit as an everlasting gift, will receive eternal life, justification, the forgiveness of sins, life-long sanctification in the Holy Spirit, an inheritance in heaven, will be adopted as God's son or daughter and be glorified with a new body once Christ returns

I want to summarize the gospel as the accomplishment of redemption in Christ and the application of redemption in Christ. The gospel involves both realities. The gospel is essentially not good unless it is applied to the elect, those who believe and repent of their sins. We can also say that the gospel is not good until each believer is eternally glorified. Because that is the reason Christ came, to save us from the guilt, power and presence of sin. Complete salvation will only happen in heaven.

Let's unpack this definition one point at a time:

**1) God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, into this world, to Israel, as prophesied in the Scriptures, in history, 2000 years ago.**

We see this truth very clearly in the gospel of John. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God sent into this world. Jesus Christ never had a beginning. He is Everlasting. “In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:1-3;14). The letter of Hebrews makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is God, the exact representation (replica) of the Father and the radiance of His glory (Hebrews 1:3). Christians believe in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally existing in three Persons, equal in essence and nature but having different roles. The fact that Jesus is called the Son of God doesn't mean that there was physical sex with Mary, his earthly mother, and God. That concept would be blasphemous. God is Spirit and cannot have sex with humans. He is holy. Jesus Christ is called the only Begotten Son of God the Father, meaning He has a special relationship with the Father that born-again children don't have and cannot have, as He is God. God sent Christ into this world in history to Israel. The fact that Jesus would come to the world and what he would do were prophesied in the Scriptures given by God to His people over many centuries. The people of God expected the Messiah to come. Jesus fulfilled more than 300 prophesies in his life, death and resurrection. We call Jesus becoming a human, the incarnation of God. It is essential to realize that Jesus was the Only Begotten of the Father; there were not many incarnations of God in history (Hebrews 9:22-28); there was only one. He came in the fullness of time.

**2) He was miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary, his early mother**

The Bible makes it clear that the birth of Jesus Christ was a miracle (Matthew 1:18-25). It cannot be repeated by a human being or through experimentation. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-80). Jesus was called Emmanuel, which means “God with us,” to fulfil the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. He was born of God without sexual union. Mary was a virgin.

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary.... And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (Luke 1:26-36 ESV).

**3) Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh, in human form. He was also truly a human being who was tired and hungry, and sad, as all humans do. He had a real human nature.**

Some people in history have tried to show that Jesus was not really a human but was like a spirit in the form of a human. The Bible makes it very clear, however, that Jesus was really a human. He slept and ate and got tired and cried and worked with his hands as a carpenter before His public ministry. The book of Hebrews goes so far as to say that He was tempted in all respects as we are tempted yet being without sin (Hebrews 4:14-16).

**4) He lived a blameless, sinless life, fulfilled the righteousness of the law on behalf of his people, and exhibited the righteousness and nature of God perfectly.**

A few times in the Scriptures, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ never sinned. He never sinned in thought, word, action, attitude or disposition. He lived a perfect life and so obtained a perfect righteousness. That is one of the reasons God came to earth, to live the life we could never live and to become a perfect Savior for us. If Jesus had sinned once in His life, if He ever made one mistake, He wouldn’t be able to save us from our sins because then He would also need a Savior to save him from his sins. We know that the punishment of sin is death (Romans 6:23). If Jesus had ever sinned once, then He had to die for his own sins.

“For to this, you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He **committed no sin**, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:22-24 ESV).

“For our sake he made him to be sin who **knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV).

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin**” (Hebrews 4:14 ESV).

Jesus came to obey all the laws of the Old Testament perfectly. He came to satisfy the just requirements of the law so that He could justify us. Jesus did not only die in our place as a substitute, but he also lived a perfect life as our substitute so that by faith in Him, we can stand perfect before God. Jesus Christ came to live a perfect life on our behalf so that through Him, we can be accepted by God. In union with Christ, God doesn't look at us through the things we have done but through the merits and achievements of Christ. The whole of Jesus' life was a life of perfection. Jesus Christ exhibited the perfect divine nature of God in all that He did. Not only did the hundreds of miracles of Jesus demonstrate the compassion and love of God in a perfect way but also God's holiness and His hatred for sin and sinful hypocrites. We see the whole panorama of God's perfections shine through and on display through the life of Christ Jesus. And God reckons Christ's righteousness to us when we trust in Him. The righteousness of Christ accounted to the believer becomes the ground of our justification before God. Without that righteousness accounted to us by faith, no one will see God!

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:3,4 ESV).

**5) He died a substitutionary death on behalf of His people, satisfied the justice of God (the just requirement of the law), and absorbed and set aside the wrath of God on behalf of His people.**

Jesus Christ came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He did not die for His own sins because He was sinless. He died for the sins of His people. He laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:15). He gave His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He came to reconcile the world unto Himself (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). He did not only die for His people among the Jews but for the whole world. The world in these passages means that God has a people across the globe, in every nation, and tribe and language group and ethnicity (See Revelation 5:9; 7:9). Jesus didn't pay for every sin of every man that has ever lived. If that be the case, then every person would go to heaven because then the sin of unbelief, of not believing in Jesus, would also be forgiven. But the Bible makes it clear that He bore the sins of His people on the cross. He did not only make salvation and forgiveness of sins possible; He actually paid for the sins of His elect across the world. He actually purchased eternal salvation for His people. With His own blood being spilt, He bought faith and repentance for those He would draw to Himself.

The Bible says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). That is why Jesus had to die. The punishment of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The soul that sins must die (Ezekiel 18:20). Because Jesus never sinned and because he was God, his death could atone for the sins of believers. The punishment we deserve is infinite and unlimited. But Jesus Christ was God, and only He could absorb and set aside the anger of God because He was and is the infinite worthy and valuable God. No one else could atone for our sins because no one else was able to absorb the unlimited wrath of God. No one else could because all have sinned and have fallen under God's judgement. We were all separated from the glory of God. Jesus satisfied the justice of God because He was God who obeyed the law perfectly and obtained a perfect experiential obedience to the law. He died as a substitute and fulfilled all the animal sacrifices given as requirements in the old covenant on that cross. He set us free from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He was the propitiation for the sins of his people (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

**Jesus Christ came to save us from God (His wrath against sin) by God (the Holy Spirit) for God (His glory) and in God (the Holy Spirit).**

When Jesus cried out the words: “it is finished”, it meant Jesus did everything necessary to reconcile us to God. Jesus was abandoned by His Father, in his human nature, on the cross so that we can be accepted. He was rejected so that we could be adopted into His family. He was cursed on our behalf so that we can be eternally blessed in the Holy Spirit!

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:23-26).

**6) After three days, He physically rose from the dead and thereby conquered the power of death, Satan, sin and sinful human nature. God vindicated Jesus Christ by raising Him from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and declared Him to be the Son of God.**

The Bible makes it very clear that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and the glory of the Father (Ephesians 1:18-20; Romans 8:9-11; Romans 6:4). The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead in a glorified body proved that God accepted His sacrifice and that He was the only Begotten Son of God (Romans 1:4). Because Jesus never sinned death could not hold Him in the grave. He didn't die for his own sin, but for the sin of His people, His elect people. All the gospels make it clear that there were eyewitnesses who saw Jesus in a glorified body (See John 21:1-10; Matthew 28:1-11; Luke 24:1-10; Mark 16:1-10). Paul, the apostle, said that if we don't believe that Jesus Christ rose physically from the dead in a spiritual, incorruptible body, our faith is worthless and that we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:11-21). Sin came into the world through Adam, the first representative of humanity. Through the last or second Adam, Jesus Christ, the second representation of humanity comes eternal life, the forgiveness of sins and victory over death and sin (See Romans 5:12-21). Jesus conquered Satan

on the cross because He never gave into sin when tempted. He broke the power of sins because He was God who never sinned, and He broke the power of death because He died a substitutionary death and because he absorbed and set aside the coming wrath of God against sin for those who believe.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:12 ESV).

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:12-14 ESV).

In Adam, we all died, but through Jesus Christ, we will all be made alive (1 Corinthians 5:22). Adam catapulted the human race into misery, death and the slavery of sins, but through Jesus Christ, believers will have eternal life, hope and joy.

**7) After 40 days after His death, Jesus ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father while all authority in heaven and earth has been given unto Him**

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). Jesus ascended into heaven on a cloud (Acts 1:11). He is seated at the right hand of the Father. All principalities and power and angels, and every name that can be named in this world and in the next is submitted unto His authority (See Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:5-11). All judgment has been given unto Jesus Christ (John 5:22). He will judge the living and the dead from all ages to come (Revelation 20:10-15). He is now the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Nothing and no one have more power than Him. Every knee will one day bow and declare that He is Lord and King, even if they now refuse to do so. Because of His work of salvation, He has this position in the universe. It is not a question of accepting Him as Lord but of submitting to Him as the

Lord of your life. He is Lord and King over all peoples and Angels and Demons. It is a case of submitting and subjecting under his supreme authority, willingly or unwillingly.

**8) Everyone who repents of their sins and believes in the Person of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary death (finished work), receiving Him as Lord and Savior and Righteousness, will be reconciled to God.**

Although God has reconciled His people to Himself, the recipients of His grace don't receive it automatically. We are commanded to repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ to receive His salvation. Salvation is a free gift to be received by faith (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:4-6; Romans 3:24-26; Romans 6:23). Everyone who receives Christ, who believes in His Name, God has given the right to become children of God (John 1:12). But we receive this gift by biblical repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot have saving faith without biblical repentance. You cannot believe savingly without turning to Jesus Christ. If your eyes are fixed on the things of this world and the pleasures of sins and self-righteousness, you wouldn't be able to see the glory of Christ. Biblical repentance involves a change of heart (contrition), a change of mind (conviction), an admission of your guilt (confession) and a change of behavior (conversion). Unless the Holy Spirit makes you aware of your sins, unless the Holy Spirit makes you alive (Ephesians 2:1-5), and unless you subsequently confess your sins to God and be broken over it (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 51:17), you wouldn't be able to see the preciousness and worth of God. Biblical repentance (2 Timothy 2:20) and genuine faith in Christ are gifts given by God through Jesus Christ and were purchased by the blood of Christ. If we repent biblically and believe in Christ, it will be the work of God, although we are not passive in this process. We are involved in repentance and faith in Jesus. It is not our repentance and faith that saves us from the wrath of God and our sins, but it is Christ who saves us. We should never make faith meritorious. Repentance and faith are just the channels that connect us to the supreme Treasure, Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ alone saves in the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:12).

We must receive Christ as our Lord and Savior and Righteousness to be saved from our sins (John 1:12). We cannot think we only want Jesus to save us from our sins but not want Him to be our Ruler and King. If we don't submit to Him

as the Ruler of our lives, then we have a Christ of our own imagination. We must receive Christ for who He is, Lord, Savior and our Treasure of righteousness. We have to receive Christ as God.

The gospel of God is not good news unless it actually reconciles us to God. In His book, "God is the gospel", John Piper makes it clear that all the benefits of the gospel: forgiveness of sins, deliverance from sins, escape from hell, an inheritance in heaven, peace of mind etc. wouldn't be good unless they bring us into fellowship with God in the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:4-7; 1 Peter 3:18). This is an essential aspect of the gospel. Many people want all the benefits of the gospel, but they don't want God! They don't love the beauty and glory and being of Christ. They don't love and esteem the holiness of God. They don't want to be inconvenienced and suffer for the gospel. They only want the blessings of God but not the being of a holy God in their lives. If God does not reconcile us to Himself and if we don't receive the Holy Spirit as an abiding reality in us, making His home within us, then Jesus, who died and suffered on the cross, would have been senseless and useless.

**9. Will be given the Holy Spirit as an everlasting gift will receive eternal life, justification, the forgiveness of sins, life-long sanctification in the Holy Spirit, an inheritance in heaven, will be adopted as God's son or daughter and be glorified with a new body once Christ returns**

With receiving Christ in your life, you receive all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, which includes: the fullness of the Holy Spirit, justification, the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from your sins and the power of Satan, an inheritance in heaven and many more to come in the new heavens and the new earth. By faith in Jesus Christ, we are declared righteous in God's sight and are, therefore, justified in God's courtroom. If God did not spare His only begotten Son but gave Him for us all, will He not give us all things beneficial, which also includes suffering and tribulation that would make us conformed to Christ's image? (Romans 8:32-37). With the Holy Spirit within us, the love of God is poured out into our hearts (Romans 5:5). No eye has seen, and no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (1 Corinthians 2:9). With receiving Christ as your brother and Savior and Lord and the Holy Spirit you are adopted as God's child

(Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:3-9). Having Christ and the Holy Spirit in your life, you become part of the family of God.

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:15-18 ESV).

**This gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes!**

**Resources:**

1. Piper, J. (2011). God is the gospel. Crossway.
2. Piper. J. (2007). The Future of Justification. Crossway.
3. Keller. T. (2012). Center Church. Zondervan.
4. Sproul. R.C. (1992). Essential Truths of the Christian Faith. Tyndale.
5. Sproul. R.C. (2017). How can I be right with God? Reformation Trust.
6. Dever. M. (2013). Nine Marks of a Healthy Church. Crossway.
7. Murray. J. (2015). Redemption Accomplished and Applied. Eerdmans.
8. Kennedy. D.J. (1980). Why I believe. Word Publishing.

## **5. It is fed by expository preaching and Bible study**

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV).

### **❖ Introduction**

It is very clear from Scripture and when you read the Gospels and the letters of Paul that Jesus and the apostles preached and proclaimed the gospel and the kingdom of God wherever they went.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15 ESV).

And he (Jesus) said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.” (Mark 1:38 ESV).

Jesus sent out the apostles to preach during his earthly ministry (Matthew 10:1-10), and after he rose from the dead, he commanded them to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all nations (Luke 24:44-50). When Paul ministered the gospel to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2:1-4) and in Asia, he preached, and so did the apostles. This is very clear in the book of Acts (2:10-48; 6:2; 8:40; 14:21; 13:13-49; 28:30,31). It is clear from Scripture that the way the sheep, the church, is fed is by the word of God, is especially the preaching and teaching of the word of God. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, he said,

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32 ESV).

In some circles, church leaders want us to believe that we shouldn't preach the word of God. They say we must just talk about the Bible. They say the most helpful thing is to have discussions about the Bible. They say we must discover the truths in the Bible for ourselves. They propose that the way churches grow is through discovery Bible studies. There are merits in having Bible studies, of course, and we don't say in any way that we should not have Bible studies and discover things in the Bible.

But there is a great danger in having Discovery Bible studies if discovery Bible studies are the only way, and the primary method, the church is fed, grown, and built up. We see in our text in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 that God charged Timothy in the presence of God and Jesus Christ to preach the word. This is not an idea the church came up with in the 20th century. We don't preach because it is just a tradition in our churches or because we think that this is a good thing to do. God charged Timothy and charges each gospel minister to preach the word. And the reasons he gives are twofold:

- ❖ Firstly, Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead. Eternity is at stake. There is a kingdom coming, and Jesus is going to appear. The world must get ready to meet Christ!
- ❖ Secondly, the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching. They will accumulate false teachers for themselves, and they will wander from the truth.

One of the biggest reasons why qualified men should devote themselves to the study and preaching of God's word is that people, because of their sinful natures, are desperate to follow their our sinful desires and to twist the word of God so that they can be comfortable in their sins and do as they please. We have seen across the world how the church of Jesus Christ has gone astray so many times because the preaching of God's word was not prominent and preeminent in the church. The world follows after healing services and ceremonies, dancing, eating grass, and drinking petrol, to get God's blessing, and I don't know what other bizarre things (these things have in the past years

transpired in South African churches). We see this in church history as well, where the Roman Catholic “Church” in the middle ages put the preaching of God’s word aside and made the sacraments and traditions and ceremonies the primary thing in the church to point people to Christ.

The Bible, however, makes it clear that it is through the preaching of God’s word that God saves those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18,21). No one will be saved by faith unless we are sent, by God, to preach the gospel (Romans 10:13-18).

Because God commanded the apostles to preach, and because this is the appointed means for the conversion of the heathen and the upbuilding of the church, we should devote ourselves to the preaching of the word to feed the church.

In this study, we are going to look at the following:

**1. What is preaching?**

**2. What is expository preaching? (The difference between exegesis and eisegesis)**

**3. Why do we say the Biblical church is fed by expository preaching and Bible study?**

**4. What are the elements of exegesis? (Hermeneutics)**

**5. What are the elements of expository preaching?**

**6. How does an expository Bible study differ from preaching?**

**1. What is preaching?**

The word for preaching in Greek is: “kerusso”, which means to announce, tell, or proclaim. It is the same word used in Romans 10:14-17, 1 Cor 1:21 and Mark 1:39.

Preaching is announcing the good news of the kingdom. It is announcing that there is forgiveness of sins available in Christ. It is telling people about God and the way of salvation. But it is more than that. It is proclaiming the word of God in its entirety. In 2 Timothy 4, we see that Paul commanded Timothy to rebuke and reprove (correct) and exhort (encourage) the sheep. We also see in

2 Timothy 3:16,17 that these are the purposes the Scriptures were given, for correction, for reproof and instruction in righteousness. God has given preaching to the church to correct false ideas, false beliefs, wrong behaviour, and sinful attitudes so that we can walk in the right way, believe the right things and have the right attitudes. Preaching is there to warn us, correct us, and encourage us to live for God. We need encouragement (exhortation), correction and rebuke.

Preaching is not just about giving information to people. It's about exulting in truth and righteousness. It's about urging people towards righteousness. It's about helping people find life everlasting. As Martin Lloyd Jones said: "Preaching is logic on fire." Preaching should be passionate because we are telling people of the glorious God, and we are helping people to fix their eyes on the most magnificent Person in the Universe, Jesus Christ. Preaching is worship because it helps people to know God, love and treasure God and show God as glorious (Expository exultation, John Piper). That is what worshipping God is all about, and that is what preaching aims to do: to help people know God better, treasure God and love God better, and show God and display God better. Biblical preaching is about boasting in Christ, boasting about God, or exulting in God and making much of God's glory. The Bible tells us that in everything, we must glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). In Biblical preaching, we aim to:

- ❖ Glorify God, and make much of God
- ❖ Boast in Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2,3), making the way of salvation known with joy
- ❖ Calling people to repent and believe in God and live a life of obedience of faith (Romans 1:5) (Expository Preaching: John Piper)

## **2. What is expository preaching? (The difference between exegesis and Eisegesis)**

Expository preaching is making clear the meaning of Scripture in its context. It is declaring the truth in Scripture. It is making the meaning of the words and truths in Scripture clear without inserting and imposing any human thoughts and sinful human ideas into it. In other words, the aim of expository preaching is not to add anything to Scripture and not to take anything away from the

meaning of Scripture. Expository preaching aims to be as faithful to Scripture as is humanly possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

To know what expository preaching means is to contrast it with other forms of preaching. First, let's look at the difference between the two terms:

Exegesis: Exegesis means to expound. To declare what is already there in the text of Scripture. It is to explain what is there without adding to it or subtracting from it. Therefore, exegesis attempts to know what the intentions of the human authors were when writing the books in the Bible, taking into account what the Holy Spirit intended by the whole of Scripture.

Eisegesis: Eisegesis is taking my own thoughts and my own ideas into the text of the Bible and forcing my own ideas into the text. Eisegesis is not faithful to Scripture but is a haphazard way of interpreting Scripture and understanding Scripture. Eisegesis is twisting the text of the Bible to say what you want it to say. It is not taking the words and sentences and the context of the text or the culture of the Bible into account but making up your own meaning from Scripture. Eisegesis dishonors God because it doesn't regard God's word as highly as we should.

### **Here are four examples of Eisegesis:**

Example 1: "I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;"

One form of eisegesis here would be to take this text out of context and say that God's children are gods, and we will become gods as Jesus is a God. People use this text to say that we will achieve God-status.

Example 2: "And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." (Mark 10:)

One form of eisegesis in this text would be to say that Jesus said he is not God himself and that Jesus never claimed to be God.

Example 3: “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” (Psalms 2:5?)

Psalm 2 is a clear Messianic Psalm. One form of eisegesis here is to say that the Son, Jesus Christ, had a beginning; he was begotten. People would say this text shows that Jesus is not God but created. This is eisegesis. This is also not the meaning of the word “begotten”.

Example 4: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV).

One form of reading into this text, or eisegesis, would be to say that some sinners cannot be forgiven. Some people would say if you have committed adultery or homosexuality, then God wouldn't be able to forgive you. This is clearly not what this text is teaching. A second form of eisegesis would be to say that the kingdom of God referred to here is the kingdom in the millennium. So those who believe in the millennium to come (of 1000 years after Christ returns) would say adulterers and drunkards can be saved while unrepentant, but they will not have a part in the millennium when Christ returns. Another form of eisegesis would be to say that the “practicing homosexuals” in this text only refer to those who were homosexual prostitutes in those days and not to homosexuals who only had one partner.

One of the biggest problems of eisegesis is that preachers take texts out of context and attempt to create a theology upon one or two texts and not taking into account the whole body of Scripture. The chief problem with eisegesis is not interpreting Scripture with Scripture.

There are different forms of expository preaching.

Topical preaching can be expository preaching. You choose a topic like “the fear of God” or “sexual immorality” and then see what the Bible says about the subject. An expository sermon on the fear of God or sexual immorality would only explain what the Bible says about these topics and nothing else. What the Bible declares about these topics would be what is declared.

Ordinary expository preaching is preaching from a specific text or portion of Scripture or preaching from a book of the Bible, like preaching from the gospel of John and then preaching through the whole book text by text.

### **3. Why do we say the Biblical church is fed by expository preaching and Bible study?**

For obvious reasons, declaring what the text says and not what we say, and our own ideas would be most beneficial to the local church. In Acts 20, Paul addressed the Ephesian elders and told them that he did not withhold the whole counsel of God from them. The best way to declare the whole counsel of God is to preach exactly what the Bible says and not what we think the Bible says. Remember, it is the word of God we should preach. It is the word of God that converts the soul (Psalm 19:7). It is the word of God that sanctifies (John 17:17) and builds us up and cleanses us (John 15:3). The best way to build the people of God up in the faith is to preach through books of the Bible, systematically. God is the primary author of the Bible, and therefore he knows that we will best understand his mind when we preach the word.

### **4. What are the elements of exegesis? (Hermeneutics)**

#### **❖ Context is everything**

So, when we come to the text or a verse in the Bible, we have to determine a few things. Firstly:

Who wrote the book?

When was it written?

To whom was it written?

What are the main themes in the book?

What can we learn about the culture at the time?

We first attempt to understand the time and context of the text.

### ❖ Literature type

Secondly, we must determine the type of literature. Are we dealing with poetry? Are we dealing with history? Are we dealing with parables? Are we dealing with letters? Are we dealing with wisdom literature? Are we dealing with apocalyptic literature? We will read and understand poetry differently from history. Because in understanding poetry, you deal with rhyme and hyperbole and symbolic language, and so on. History you read and understand differently from letters. History deals with facts and events. Didactic literature, like the letters of Paul, wants to teach doctrine (truth). Parables as well, we understand differently from didactic literature. We shouldn't interpret parables dogmatically, as if everything in parables has a dogmatic teaching behind it. Also, with apocalyptic literature, we are dealing with images and symbolic language. We should be careful how we interpret this kind of literature. It is enough to say that we should be cautious when we read the Bible, not just jump to conclusions when we read the text and make haphazard connections.

### ❖ Asking questions about the text

So, when we come to the Bible, we don't assume we understand the text. For one, the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek by many different authors. We have translations of the originals, and in any translation, even though it may attempt to be as accurate as possible, some of the meaning of words and ideas would be lost in translation. First of all, it would be good when you have chosen a text to examine more than one translation, maybe three or four and see where the differences are. After you have found the differences in meaning, you might want to consult dictionaries and commentaries and the original languages to see which ones are the most accurate to the original documents. When you read your text, many things might not be clear. Some things might be hard to understand. Ask questions about the text. Interrogate the text before you. We don't do this as if we want to judge the text. No, the text is God's word and must judge us. Ultimately, the text and God's word interrogate us and disclose our motives and sins!

### ❖ Understanding words and phrases and how they connect

So, dictionaries and commentaries, and other books can help us to determine the meaning of words and sentences. But we can't stop here. When we have chosen the text, we must determine how the text is structured. How do the verses in the text fit together and help us to understand words and verses on their own? Words like "therefore" and "so" are critical because they help us understand and not take verses out of context, but they help us see how sentences and thought patterns flow and interconnect. We call this doing a structural analysis of a text. An excellent website to learn more about structural analyses of texts are Biblearc.com.

❖ Scripture interprets Scripture (The implicit is explained by the explicit)

A fundamental principle that should guide all our reading of Scripture is that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. We call this the "analogy of faith." Because all of Scripture is God-breathed, and we know that the Bible is sufficient to guide us in all holy living and truth, we know that Scripture will lead us to know other Scriptures. So, when we come to a text that is difficult to understand, we must be guided by the principle of: "the explicit should interpret the implicit". If one Scripture seems to say Jesus is not God and many other Scriptures tell us emphatically that Jesus is God, then we must interpret the Scripture that seems to indicate that He is not God (Mark 10:17,18) with the text that says, He is God (John 1:1-3,14; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:1-10). We should also be careful how we interpret narratives. The narratives in the Bible should be read in light of the didactic material because the didactic material, like Paul's discourses and the teachings of Jesus, gives us more light on the meaning of the gospel.

❖ The importance of Systematic theology (Scripture never contradicts itself)

Another clear principle we must believe in the Bible is to know that Scripture never contradicts itself. The Bible doesn't say that we are gods and that we are not gods at the same time. There is truth in the Universe. Truth is not relative. God has a particular character, and that is a fact. He is immutable (unchangeable) (See Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17,18). God is not evil and good at the same time. He is just good all the time, as the Bible reveals. God is not just and unjust at the same time. He is just, just. The Bible says we shall have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:1-3). That means we cannot say we are

gods and are to be worshipped. In Acts 12, when people worshiped Herod, the king and when he consequently did not give honor to God, God killed him. This story clearly indicates we are not gods and should not be worshipped. So even if it may seem that some Scripture contradicts other Scriptures, this is never the case. The problem lies with our finite understanding. We don't know, as God knows. God is infinite. With more study of the Scripture, you will see that no Scripture contradicts another Scripture. This is why it is essential to study what the Bible teaches on every possible subject. There is truth about everything.

❖ What was the intention of the author for the immediate context

So, one of the main things the pastor and Bible student want to determine is what the human author intended to communicate to his immediate audience. What was the intention of the author in writing the text? This is very important to determine. So, when we come to Mark 10:17,18, we know that Mark's intention was not to tell us that Jesus is not God. If we read the whole book of Mark, we clearly see that Mark portrayed Jesus as the Son of God, who was God Himself, who forgave sins (Mark 2:1-12). And only God has the power to forgive sins! But the pastor doesn't stop here.

❖ What was and is the intention of the Holy Spirit?

There is always more to the text that the human author intended to communicate because the Bible is primarily God's book. God is the primary author of every text and every sentence of the Bible. This is especially relevant to interpreting the Old Testament. The Old Testament writers, when writing the books of the Bible, didn't know the details of the coming Messiah as we know it today. So, we have to constantly ask: what are the big themes in the Bible? What are the overarching themes in the Bible, and how do our texts relate to these themes and messages? The Old Testament must be interpreted in light of the New Testament. Revelation is progressive. We have more light and revelation in the New Testament than in the Old. The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.

❖ How does the text we are preaching fit into the big story of the Bible?

The big themes of the Bible are:

- The Person of Jesus Christ and the nature of God
- The reality of evil, the fall and sinful humanity
- The work of Jesus Christ, and we can say salvation history
- God's glory being upheld and being on display, in creation, in history, in providence, salvation and judgment
- The themes of covenant and the kingdom of God
- The life of faith and love of the people of God (the church)

❖ How does the text relate to previous texts, the following text, and the book in the Bible (Scripture interprets Scripture)

So, when you come to understand the texts in the Bible, you have to always relate the text you are working on to the previous text and the text that comes after it and attempt to determine how they correlate and how they help you to understand one another. Then after you come to grips with how they fit together like a puzzle, you determine how your text fits into the specific book of the Bible you are preaching from. And then how does your text relate to the rest of the Bible and the major themes of the Bible (Christ, sin, salvation, God's glory, covenant, kingdom, and the life of obedience and faith)?

❖ How does God want us to respond today in our context because of this text?  
(Faith and obedience)

As we have said earlier, preaching is about worshipping God and aims to help people worship God and live a life of faith in Christ and love.

So, when we come to any text, we have to ask:

What does God want me to do? And  
How does God want me to change? And  
What does God want me to believe about Him and Christ? And  
How should I glorify God because of what I read and heard?

When we preach, we are calling people continually to repentance and faith in Christ. The children of God need to grow, and they grow by repentance and

believing in the word of God. And people in your congregation get saved by repentance and faith in the word, by Christ and the work of the Spirit.

Another question to ask about the text you preach is: How is this text relevant for your people today?

## 5. What are the elements of expository preaching (Stuart Olyott)

The book of Stuart Olyott (Preaching Pure and Simple) summarizes good preaching in the following way:

### ➤ Accurate exegesis (explaining the text and context)

We dealt with this in the previous section. Make sure you are saying what the text is saying, and you are showing your people what you are saying is from God's word. We are preachers of the word of God; we don't preach our ideas but Christ as Lord.

### ➤ Theological truth

What does the Word reveal about God?

What does the Word reveal about man?

What does the Word reveal about the world?

What does the word reveal about God's plan and purposes, and will?

### ➤ Clear structure

A sermon is like a human being. Without the skeleton, the body cannot stand and move. So, it is with a sermon. If there is a clear structure with three to five main points and the main points leading to the overarching point or theme, it will be a good sermon. The sermon must have a skeleton to stand. I have listened to hundreds of sermons in my life. The ones that I remember most are the ones with a clear structure and not a sermon that seems like a collage. Like rivulets that lead into a river, so each of the main points should lead to the theme or great idea of your sermon or overarching point or theme of your sermon.

➤ Vivid illustrations (Word pictures)

Word pictures and illustrations help people to remember the preaching more. The Old and New Testaments use pictures and illustrations frequently, and so should we when we preach to clarify our points.

➤ Applying the word to today's contexts

Have you applied the word to your hearers?  
Do they know what God expects from them?  
Do they know what God wants to change in them?

➤ How does the text point to Christ and reveal Christ?

Have you clearly pointed people to Christ and the cross of Christ? Paul said he wanted to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). When we preach the Bible, we must preach Christ. We must tell people how to be saved and how Christ and his atonement are the ground for all the blessings we experience in the Christian life and that Christ glorified is the greatest prize and blessing of the Christian life (Expository Exultation: John Piper).

➤ Helpful delivery (simplicity)

Is your sermon clear enough that people with a basic education can understand it? We shouldn't use big and fancy words to impress people. We should aim to make things clear in our preaching. Clarity is much more important than eloquence. Our job is to explain, in simple terms, what God requires of us and expound the texts of Scripture. I know it will depend on audience to audience which words you should use. But even in an educated society, some people are not as educated. We should labor to make ourselves understood and make things clear.

➤ Supernatural authority (bathed in prayer)

Paul said that his preaching and their salvation rested on the power of God and not on the wisdom of men or eloquence of speech (1 Cor 2:1-3). The only way

to preach is in utmost dependence on the Holy Spirit. Preaching is not a man-made task. The aim of preaching is the transformation of sinful human beings; people enslaved to their sinfulness and sins. And this transformation is impossible without the work and presence of the Holy Spirit taking up His words and driving them home and into the consciences of men and women and children. The word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). It is only the Spirit of God that can change people. Therefore, we must be men of prayer and pleading for God's help and power frequently. It is when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines into the hearts of men that transformation takes place. This is only possible when the Holy Spirit works when we preach Christ and Him crucified.

## **6. How does Bible study differ from expository preaching**

The big difference between expository preaching and Bible studies is the setting and the interaction that takes place. During Bible studies, the same exposition should take place. But the Bible teacher and pastor can ask many questions about the text and clarify misunderstandings.

- ❖ Encourage interaction and questions after exegesis, for example, after the pastor or teacher explained a few verses. Ask whether anyone wants to add something.
- ❖ Clarify misunderstandings when there is confusion. This implies that the teacher or pastor has studied the text thoroughly. Through interactions with the audience, more light can be given through the Holy Spirit that is consistent with the Scriptures. The Scriptures are a deep well to draw from and a deep mine to discover precious gold.
- ❖ Affirm correct understanding, illustrations, applications and paraphrasing from the audience when others want to add something.

### **Resources:**

1. Piper, John. Expository exultation. 2018. Crossway
2. Olyott, Steward, Preaching Pure and Simple
3. Ryle, J.C. Simplicity in Preaching. 2010. The Banner of Truth Trust.
4. Sproul, R.C. Knowing Scripture.

5. Clifford, J, Combs, H, Frew, D. Biblical Preaching Handbook. 2018. William Carey Bible Institute. Cape Town.

## **6. It saturates itself in prayer**

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:7-10 ESV)

### **Introduction**

Our topic is titled “The Biblical church saturates itself in prayer.” So, when we say that the church should saturate itself in prayer, we are saying that one of its functions is to pray. Just as a person's body functions through breathing air in and out, the church survives on prayer. Prayer is like the oxygen we breathe in. It is the cord that connects our spiritual life to the energy source, which is God. Without God, we are spiritually dead. Without electricity, our computers won't function. Without petrol, in the motorcar, the motorcar cannot work. Without prayer, the local church dies. Without prayer, the church is useless. The early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and the prayers (Acts 2:42-48). So, what is prayer all about?

Prayer can be defined as communication with God. Talking to God and listening to God. If you go through the book of Psalms, which is the prayer book of the Bible, you see so many prayers recorded for us. And as we scan through the whole Bible, we see God's words recorded to us.

Someone once said, “a man's spiritual life can only be as healthy and strong as his prayer life”. We may add: “A local church is only as strong and healthy by the time it spends in prayer.”

If you look at the history of revivals in the church and you look intently at what preceded outpourings of the Holy Spirit and blessing upon the church, you will see that times of revival and blessing always were preceded by times of extraordinary prayer among a group or groups of believers. This is true of the revival during the Great Awakening in the 1730's and 1740's in America and

England. The Moravian brothers had a 100-year, 24-hour prayer chain. This prayer chain started simultaneously, to my knowledge, as the great awakening in America. Many missionaries were sent out as a result of the prayer chain across the world. The same happened when there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1859-1861 in England and South Africa. Also, before the Welch revival in 1904 and in South Africa and South Korea, much prayer preceded these movements of God. I don't know of any revival in history that wasn't linked to much time of prayer and repentance before God moved in power.

There is a solid link between God's blessing upon a church and the number of members devoting themselves to prayer in that church. Prayer is not the only thing that is important for a blessing upon a church; confession of sin, repentance, Biblical preaching, sound doctrine, and many other factors are essential, but we can safely say that a prayer-less church is an unbiblical church. In this session, I want to look at the following:

- The sovereignty of God and prayer
- The example of Jesus, the apostles and the saints
- How should we pray?
- The elements of prayer
- What should we pray?
- When should we pray?

### 1) The sovereignty of God and prayer

- God is in absolute control of everything

The first thing we must know about God if we are going to pray right is to understand who God is. The Bible tells us God is sovereign. He rules the world in righteousness and mercy. Nothing is outside the scope of his control. He rules and works everything according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:10). Everything that pleases Him, he does (Psalm 115:6). Nothing happens in the world that he is unaware of. Everything happens precisely within his control. Not a bird falls to the ground without his will (Matthew 10:28). And because everything in this world happens exactly as God wants it to happen, and because everything is within his control and because God knows

everything that will occur on earth, we know that God has decreed everything that comes to pass. This is what it means that God is sovereign. Nothing happens outside the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:10). He does not merely permit evil things to occur, but he ordains them to occur. He decreed things to happen.

▪ God rules and controls everything without being responsible for sin (the doctrine of concurrence)

You might say: But then God is the author of evil! No, he is not! An essential doctrine that we find in the Bible, which is difficult to understand, but nevertheless is taught in the Scriptures, is the doctrine of concurrence. This doctrine means that although on one level God is in control of everything and everything happens exactly as He wants it to happen, we are still moral agents and responsible for our choices as humans. We are moral beings, free agents who can make choices. God doesn't force us to make choices. We make them freely, although we are bound to our sinful nature when we are unconverted. We are free yet slaves to our corrupted natures. Because we do what we want to do, that is sin; we are responsible for our actions. God is not the author of sin. He never sins, and He never forces people to sin. We are accountable for our own sins. God can stop us from sinning if he chooses, but he doesn't always. We see this doctrine plays itself out, especially in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Judas sinned when he betrayed Jesus. The Pharisees sinned when they accused Jesus of blasphemy. The Jewish crowd sinned when they shouted, "crucify Jesus". Pilate sinned when he handed Jesus over to be crucified. The Roman soldiers sinned when they crucified Jesus. Nevertheless, it was God's predetermined plan before the foundation of the world that Jesus should be crucified (Acts 2:20-39). It was prophesied that Jesus would be betrayed and that he would be crucified. Yet, God didn't sin in allowing Jesus to be crucified. It was God the Father ultimately who crushed His only Son, and it was not a sin (Isaiah 53). God was in control of everything. And so, it is with human life in general. God is in control of everything all the time, yet he is not a sinner, or evil, or responsible for the sins of men and women.

When you think about how the Bible reveals God, you may think: Why do we need to pray if God ordains everything going on to occur according to his plan?

- God rules the world through the prayers of his saints and providence, his decrees (prayer is necessary)

We know that God rules the world. But he uses means to rule his world. He made humans, his agents, his ambassadors, his image bearers, to represent him on this earth (Genesis 1:27). And while many of them live in rebellion against Him, God has chosen the church, his redeemed, to execute his will and plans and redemptive purposes on this earth. God saves and sanctifies his people through the means of grace. God rules the world through the prayers of his saints. We cannot say that God does nothing except through his church. But God has decided to save his people and sanctify his people through the means of grace, that is, through the preaching of the gospel and the prayers of his people.

One heretical preacher, Myles Monroe, once said that God can do nothing unless we, his people, give him access to this earth. This is utter nonsense. God doesn't need our permission to do things on this earth. Instead, God saves his people and implants in them his desires, his thoughts, and his plans, and then we pray according to God's desires, God's plans and God's thoughts. God doesn't need our permission to do things. He is God. He reigns. He graciously wants to use us and moves us to pray the things that are on his heart and mind, and so establishes restored fellowship with us so that we can have a dynamic relationship with Him and see regular answers to prayer.

Therefore, prayer is necessary. It is essential. It is the means by which God rules the world and saves and sanctifies his people on earth. There are many commands in Scripture where we are commanded to pray!

James 4:2 "You do not have, because you do not ask."

1 Timothy 2:1-2 "First of all then, I urge you that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."

Ephesians 6:18 “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”

Romans 12:12 “Be constant in prayer.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing.”

Luke 18:1-8 “And He (Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart...”

Matthew 7:7-10 “Ask and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find, knock, and the door will be opened unto you.”

John 16:24 “Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full.”

## 2) The example of Jesus, O.T saints, and the apostles in Acts

### • Moses, David and Daniel

When we look at the lives of Moses (Ex 32-34), David, Daniel and the other prophets, we see they were men of prayer. We have so many of King David’s prayers recorded in the Bible. They were not perfect men, but they were men who sought God. It was Daniel’s custom to pray three times a day. Moses communed with God alone in his tent. It is recorded that David spent time early in the morning with God (Psalm 63). It is quite remarkable that even when the Holy Spirit was not given like in the New Testament, with power, the Old Testament saints were not strangers to God’s presence and favor.

### • Jesus

When we study the gospels, we see clearly that it was Jesus’ custom to spend the early morning with His Father. He woke up early before sunrise to commune with His Father. Now, we must know that Jesus was God. He was omnipotent. He still is. If Jesus needed to spend so much time with His Father, how much more we, who are sinful and weak and prone to sin so many times,

even as believers! Jesus set us the example to set appointed prayer times, to be alone with God. “Watch and pray,” he said to his disciples often and to us.

- The Apostles and the early church

We see in the Book of Acts before the Holy Spirit came in power that, the disciples came together and prayed in Jerusalem. And as they prayed in unity, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down in power and filled all the disciples and apostles. We also see throughout the book of Acts (Acts 2:42-48; 3,4,10,13:1-3, 14) and many other places that the early church devoted themselves to prayer. They set the example of praying for the salvation of the lost and the edification of the church.

This is also very evident in the letters of Paul and Peter.

### 3) How should we pray? (What is prayer?)

- ❖ Resting in God (Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 18:46;91)

In Matthew 11:28-30 it is recorded that Jesus said: “Come to Me, all who are burdened and heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV). We must be careful not to make prayer a means to exhaust other people in the congregation. An essential element of prayer is to come to Jesus and casting all your burdens unto him (1 Peter 5:7). All your anxieties, all your cares and all your sins must be cast upon Jesus. Prayer is about finding refuge from the world. An essential element of prayer is coming to God for rest and refuge. That is what we see in the life of David. He called God his stronghold, his refuge, his high tower and his fortress (Psalm 18:1-3). Is that what prayer is to you? To take cover in God?

- ❖ Wait upon God and listen

Prayer is not just about us talking. Many people, when they think of prayer, think of God as a kind of slot machine. You throw your prayers into God, as many as you can, into the “Machine”, and then wait until you get the results and, hopefully, the jackpot! This form of praying is an insult to God. We don’t

pray just because we want and need things. Prayer is about having communion with God. It's about enjoying God's presence and friendship. It's about confessing your sins and then receiving forgiveness from God. It's about spending time with Someone you want to spend time with. It's about knowing God better. Reading his word and allowing God to speak to you and showing you the path of blessing and favor is what prayer is about. Prayer is more about listening to God than talking to God. And we cannot listen if we are not waiting upon God. When we come to the point of quieting our hearts before God, God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible.

#### ❖ In the Holy Spirit

Before we are converted, we don't really pray. We ignore God. We reject God. We are angry with God. But when God starts to work in our hearts and makes us alive spiritually, and convicts us of our sins, we begin to cry out for mercy and forgiveness. We cannot pray without God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, unless we are born again, we cannot pray. Jude 24 and Ephesians 6:18 tells us to pray in the Spirit. That means we must be led by the Spirit when we pray and pray the words of God. Romans 8:26 tells us that we don't know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit makes intercessions on our behalf according to the will of God. We are utterly reliant on the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray and to guide us in prayer. We need the power and presence and words of the Holy Spirit to pray.

Sometimes we don't know what to pray for, but the Spirit knows what we need. The Spirit prays with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

#### ❖ With understanding

When we look at the prayers of Paul and David recorded for other saints and us in the Bible, we see that they prayed intelligently. Therefore, when we pray, we must not be like babies repeating the same words repeatedly. We don't see the saints praying like this—they prayed intelligent prayers. We must pray the prayers recorded in the Bible.

#### ❖ Without vain repetitions (Matthew 6:6-9; Ecclesiastes 5:1-5)

Jesus told his disciples they should not pray as the heathen did to their gods. They cut themselves and scream and shout and think the louder they pray, and the more they shout and repeat what they say, God will be more inclined to hear their prayers. Not so. Jesus said, when you pray, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret, and he who is in secret will reward you openly. Do not be like the hypocrites who pray on the street corners to be seen of men.

We get the same idea in Ecclesiastes 5:1-5. There it says that when we come to God, we should not offer our prayers like fools and be like fools. God knows what we are going to say before we say it. Our words must be few. Because he is in heaven, and we are on earth. I have visited many churches and places where people pray like the heathen. Vain repetitions are going on everywhere. Jesus said that is not the way to pray.

For many years in my Christian walk, I prayed like a heathen. I know what it is to use vain repetitions. I know that God rebuked me in his word for doing this. Many times, we pray, using vain repetitions because we don't fix our eyes on the promises of God. We pray because we don't believe in God. We pray out of anxiety because of a lack of understanding of the sovereignty of God.

Jesus showed us how to pray.

❖ Fervently: James 5:16-18

❖ Persistently (Luke 18:1-8; Romans 12:12; 1 Tess 5:17; Matthew 7:7-9)

Even though the Bible tells us we should not use vain repetitions, Jesus urged us to pray and not lose heart. In Matthew 7:7-10 Jesus told his disciples to ask, seek and knock. If you look at the tense of the Greek verbs in this passage, you will see that the tense used is the continuous tense. A correct translation would read, "Keep on asking and you will receive, keep on seeking, and you will find, keep on knocking, and the door will be opened unto you" or "asking you will receive, seeking, you will find, knocking, the door will be opened". Jesus emphasized that we must be persistent in prayer.

And then in this passage, it gives us the motivation why we should keep on coming to the Father. If we will provide bread and fish and all kinds of good

things to our children, even though we are sinful, how much more will God give good things to us if we ask Him? The answer. He is a good Father. He will look after us. He will provide us with good things! If we ask for good things, He will give them to us!

#### 4. **The Elements of prayer (ACTS)**

When we look at the prayers recorded in the Bible, we can categorize all the prayers to God into the following categories: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

##### ❖ Adoration

We tell God that He is excellent and wonderful and perfect. We adore Him for who He is and what He has done, and what He is doing. We focus on His attributes and love him through our words and being.

##### ❖ Confession

Much of our relationship with God is discovering sins and wrong attitudes, words and actions. Therefore, confessions of sins are an important and essential part of prayer. Without confession, we stand before God as liars (1 John 1:8-10).

##### ❖ Thanksgiving

We thank and praise God for his many spiritual blessings and temporal blessings. We see these recorded all through the Bible. If we know what God has done and is doing for us and going to do, we will thank Him constantly.

##### ❖ Supplication and intercession

And then we see how the saints have pleaded with God for protection and safety and forgiveness and cleansing and guidance and deliverance and so on, not only for themselves but for other believers and non-believers.

## 5. What should we pray for?

Jesus told us to pray like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”  
(Matthew 6:9-11).

This prayer of Jesus did not tell us that we should use only these words when we pray. That was not the intention. What Jesus gave his followers here were broad categories and main priorities when they prayed. When you look through the prayers of the Bible, you will see they all relate to these broad categories when we pray to God.

### ➤ Our Father in heaven: God must be your Father

When we pray, we acknowledge that God is our Father; we are his children. We are to pray with the view that God is Our Father. We are a family. He is not only my Father. He is the Father of all who believe in Christ and have been converted. He is a Father. He wants good things for us. He knows what is best for us. He is a provider. He is the One who leads us. He is our Father. He loves his children. He protects them.

### ➤ Hallowed be your Name: God’s glory as our focus

We should be more concerned about His Name and the fame of His Name than ours. We should pray that His Name is not only glorified but hallowed, be sanctified. The Name of God stands for His Person. We should be concerned for His holy Name. God is holy, and we should pray that His holy Name not be profaned, not by us, not by the church, nor by the global Church or the world. We should labor for the hallowing of God’s Name on earth as it is in heaven.

➤ Your kingdom come: God's kingdom as our focus (Operation World)

Secondly, our priority should be expanding His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We should pray that God's kingdom grows in every area of life, in each country, among each people group, and in each facet of society: politics, education, entertainment, sport, medicine, government, police etc. We should pray for the Lord of the harvest to thrust more labourers into his harvest (Mathew 9:35-38).

Pray for specific things: pray for particular missionaries. Pray for the end of abortion on demand. Pray for the eradication of pornography.

➤ Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven: God's will and righteousness as our focus

Our following petition should be the accomplishment of God's will, not only in our lives but in every area of society and life. We are not here asking for God's will of decree to be accomplished because it is always accomplished, but we are asking that God's will of command, or his moral will, be accomplished in every area of life. We are praying that God's Ten Commandments be obeyed everywhere, all the time, as it is in heaven. We pray that the church be conformed to the image of Christ. We pray that the gospel will go out into every sphere of the world etc. We pray for the conversion of the heathen.

Pray for specific things:

Pray for the conversion of specific people: a family member etc.

➤ Give us this day our daily bread: For personal physical and spiritual needs

God should be our focus, but his children are not unimportant. We also have needs, physical needs and spiritual needs. We should pray for our daily needs: food, clothing, housing, transport, medical and psychological. Also, our spiritual needs are important here. Jesus is the bread of life. He satisfies our spiritual needs.

Pray for specific things: a car, sick people, jobs, food etc.

➤ Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors: For our spiritual need of forgiveness and exhibiting Christ and love

We should pray that God forgives our sins. We should confess our sins and pray that God gives us his love so that we can forgive others their sins with the love that he is able to forgive our sins. Only in Christ can our sins be forgiven, and only in Christ, by the Spirit, will we be able to forgive those who hate and abuse us.

Confess specific sins. Pray that God will forgive you of particular sins. Pray for the love of God to fill your heart.

➤ Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For our physical and spiritual protection

We pray that God would protect us from physical danger and spiritual danger and temptations, and the things that lead us into sins. Satan is real, the world is real, and the flesh is real. So, we pray that God would keep us safe from temptations and the things that would lead us to sin, knowing that we have to be witnesses in this world. We acknowledge our desperate need for day-by-day salvation and deliverance from evil.

➤ For to you belong the power, the kingdom, the glory, forever: Having the right focus and understanding

Although some manuscripts don't add this part in the gospel of Matthew, it is right to ascribe to God the kingdom, power and glory because it is consistent with what the Bible teaches. As God uses us, as God saves us, as God uses us to promote his kingdom and glory, we should realize that these things belong essentially to God. We have power and the kingdom and glory because God has given us these things. We don't have them in our natural state. We should never forget this truth.

❖ For unity in the body of Christ (John 17)

Another prayer to study is Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17. In that prayer, we see Jesus's focus on unity in his body, the global Church. He prayed that we are one in truth and holiness.

❖ Paul's prayers

When we study Paul's prayers in the New Testament, we see how they expand and elaborate on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-22; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:9-11 etc.)

**6. When should we pray?**

-  
❖ At home (Prayer closets and family devotions, individually)

Set a time every day for private devotions—Bible reading and prayer.

Set a time for family devotions.

If you don't prioritize, it won't happen.

Pray for the church at home.

❖ At set Prayer meetings (corporately)

Prioritize the prayer meetings.

Pray for individual families at the prayer meetings.

❖ At Worship services and Bible studies

Pray for individual families and the sick in the church.

Pray for the country and for those who rule the country.

Pray for a country in the world at church.

❖ Without ceasing (the disposition of prayer) with watching

Have a disposition of prayer. Don't do anything or watch anything that would cause you not to be able to pray—praying without words. Pray when you travel, wait at the bus stop or taxi when you stand in line etc.

## **7. It is led by biblical pastors and elders**

### **Introduction**

We must make it clear from the start that God has ordained from Biblical times that His people should have leaders. These leaders, we can say, were called shepherds in Old and in New Testament times. When God established His church in the Old Testament, some prophets and kings, and priests had different functions in the life of Israel. We also see from Moses' time that God helped him, through Jethro, his father-in-law, to appoint leaders over thousands and hundreds and fifties. We can also call these people who lead the people of Israel elders. They had the privilege and responsibility to look after those under them, to lead them, to protect them, and to care for them. We can say they shepherded God's people. In Ezekiel 34, we saw God was angry with the leaders and shepherds of Israel because they did not lead and care for their people in the right way.

We see this also in the New Testament. Jesus called the twelve apostles Himself. He handpicked them, and he called Paul the apostle with the other apostles (with the prophets) to be the foundation on which the church would be built (Ephesians 2:20). When God established the New Testament church, he appointed apostles to lead them.

But as we read how the church grow in the book of Acts, we don't see more apostles or prophets appointed. As Paul evangelized and preached, we see people coming to faith and churches being established. But wherever new churches were planted, we see Paul appointing elders to lead his people.

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them unto the Lord in whom they believed” (Acts 14:23 ESV).

In Paul's farewell address to the church in Ephesus, he called the elders of the church together (Acts 20:17) and committed them to shepherd and care for the people that God had placed under their care.

“Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him... Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood...And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Read Acts 20).

As Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus, they had to appoint elders (Titus 1:5) and deacons. And as we look closely at Scripture, as in 1 Peter 5, the tasks of the elders were to shepherd the flock of God. Nowhere in Scripture do we see qualifications for pastors, but we do see qualifications given for elders. This is so because, from the elders, full-time pastors were called by God. All pastors are elders and therefore have the responsibility to shepherd (or pastor) the people of God. But all elders are not full-time pastors. So, we see that from what we read in 1 Peter 5 and Acts 20, pastors or elders had the responsibility to shepherd the flock of God. They had the responsibility to oversee, look after, and care for the flock and people of God.

In this study, we want to look at the following:

- 1) **Why should pastors and elders lead?**
- 2) **Who qualifies? 1 Timothy 3:1-7**
- 3) **How should they lead? 1 Peter 5:1-4**
- 4) **Specific responsibilities of church leaders**

### 1) **Why should pastors and elders lead?**

The Bible makes it clear in the book of Acts and in the epistles (Titus and 1 Timothy) that God ordained that the church should have leaders. And these leaders, as we see in the book of Acts and epistles, are elders and deacons. Just as in a family, the man leads the family, and just as God has instituted government to rule in any given country, so in the local church, which is the body of Christ, God appointed the local church to be led by elders. When we look at Scripture, we see the significance of appointing a plurality of elders. When Jesus appointed his apostles, there was a plurality of apostles. In the early Jerusalem church, there were many elders. Also, with the church in Antioch, there were many elders (Acts 13:1-3). When Paul gave his farewell

address to the Ephesians, he called the elders together. Also, in 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter encourages the elders to care for the flock. This was also Paul's directive to Titus:

“This is why I left you in Crete so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—” (Titus 1:5 ESV).

There are several reasons why a plurality of elders should lead local churches. There are, of course, cases or churches which do not have more than one elder who can lead because no one else qualifies, but that is not the ideal situation. Here are four reasons why a plurality of elders is the way God wants to rule a local church:

- ❖ Responsibilities are shared for teaching and caring.
- ❖ It creates checks on autocratic styles of leadership and misrule.
- ❖ It prevents one elder from “ruling the church.”
- ❖ It cultivates an accountability structure among the leaders.

## **2. Who qualifies?**

### **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer (episkopos), he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer (episkopos) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:1-7 ESV).

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above

reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." (Titus 1:5-9 ESV).

▪ **Must be above reproach (above criticism)**

“This Christian elder must be blameless; *ανεπιληπτον*, a person against whom no evil can be proved; one who is everywhere invulnerable; for the word is a metaphor, taken from the case of an expert and skillful boxer, who so defends every part of his body that it is impossible for his antagonist to give one hit. So, this Christian elder is one that has so conducted himself as to put it out of the reach of any person to prove that he is either unsound in a single article of the Christian faith or deficient in the fulfilment of any duty incumbent on a Christian. He must be irreprehensible; for how he can reprove that in others which they can reprove in him?” (Adam Clarke)

To be blameless doesn't mean the pastor must be sinless. It means there should be no serious charge from anyone laid upon a person that would disqualify him. He must not have a reputation for being a heavy drinker or being adulterous or losing his temper or being violent etc.

▪ **The husband of one wife**

“He must be the husband of one wife. If he is married, he should be no polygamist; and have only one wife, i.e., one at a time. It does not mean that if he has been married and his wife dies, he should never marry another. Some have most foolishly spiritualized this, and say that by one wife, the Church is intended! This silly quibbling needs no refutation. The apostle's meaning appears to be this: that he should not be a man who has divorced his wife and married another, nor one that has two wives at a time. It does not appear to have been any part of the apostle's design to prohibit second marriages, of which some have made such a serious business. But it is

natural for some men to tithe mint and cummin in religion, while they neglect the weightier matters of the law” (Adam Clarke).

- **Sober minded**

He must be a man who has a good understanding of all things. He must not be foolish in his thinking. He must know what is going on in the world and must be able to discern what is needed in the church and for the kingdom.

- **Self-controlled: inwardly restraining strong feelings**

“He must have a proper and limited use of all earthly enjoyments, keeping every sense under proper restraint, and never permitting the animal part to subjugate and rule the rational” (Adam Clarke)

- **Respectable**

“He must be of good behavior; κοσμιον, orderly, decent, grave, and correct in the whole of his appearance, carriage, and conduct. The preceding term, σωφρονα, refers to the mind; this latter, κοσμιον, refers to external manners. A clownish, rude, or bad-mannered man should never have the rule of the church of God; the sour, the sullen, and the boisterous should never be invested with a dignity which they would most infallible disgrace” (Adam Clarke)

- **Hospitable**

“A lover of hospitality, φιλοξενον. A lover of strangers. Instead of φιλοξενον, one MS. has φιλοπτωζον, a lover of the poor. That minister who neglects the poor, but frequently visits the rich, knows little of his Master's work, and has little of his Master's spirit” (Adam Clarke). A pastor's house must be open to strangers and even refugees. He must be willing to help and welcome people who are destitute and in need. The word here is primarily referring to strangers.

- **Able to teach**

Firstly, a pastor must understand the fundamentals of the faith. He must understand sound doctrine and the gospel. But that is not all. He must not only understand the Bible and the truths that are affirmed. It is one thing to understand. That comes first. But many who understand doctrine cannot explain and teach doctrine. Pastors must have the gift of teaching. They must be able to teach difficult things, the doctrine of the Bible in a language ordinary people can understand. God must give pastors the ability to teach. Without this ability, you cannot be a pastor.

▪ **Hold firm to the trustworthy word**

It is one thing to understand sound doctrine; it is another to teach it; it is yet another thing to believe it and hold firmly onto it in your heart. The pastor will, throughout his life, be confronted with people who spread false teachings. The pastor must hold onto sound doctrine even if everybody around him clings to that which is false. We see the wealth, health and prosperity gospel rife in Africa, Asia and America. When some pastors succumb to these deceptions, what will you do? An elder and pastor holds on, not only understands, not only teaches but believes and holds on to the trustworthy word!

▪ **Able to give instruction in sound doctrine (rebuke those who contradict sound doctrine)**

The pastor, as I said before, is able to give instruction and teach. But to teach is one thing; to rebuke is another thing. To rebuke those who contradict sound doctrine requires courage! The pastor, as John Calvin said, must have a voice (Staff) to gather sheep and a Rod to chase away wolves. A pastor, because he loves the sheep, God's children, must have the courage to rebuke those who come into the congregations with false teachings to deceive and lead astray. The righteous are as bold as a lion!

▪ **Not a drunkard**

The Bible says that no drunkard will enter the kingdom of heaven. Drunkenness goes along with a lack of self-control. If you cannot control the amount of alcohol you drink, don't drink at all. Also, drunkenness goes along with other sins, like immodesty, indecency, sexual immorality, coarse joking,

violence and quarrels. We know these things all too well in Africa and all over the world. A drunkard is disqualified for the ministry and from the kingdom of God!

- **Not violent but gentle**

Many people have short fuses (short tempers). The pastor should not get angry quickly but be patient with people and himself. If you lose your temper in front of people in the congregation, you actually disqualify yourself from the ministry. This has happened recently to a famous pastor in America. He got angry a few times over sins in his congregation, but to such an extent that his reputation was ruined. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit.

- **Not arrogant and quick-tempered**

“Not self-willed, μηαυθαδη. Not one who is determined to have his own way in everything, setting up his own judgment to that of all others; expecting all to pay homage to his understanding. Such a governor in the Church of God can do little good and may do much mischief” (Adam Clarke). Pastors should have low opinions of themselves, even if they understand the Bible and the doctrines of the Bible. They should be humble in demeanor and esteem themselves as insignificant. Do you think higher of others than of yourself? Be honest!

- **Not quarrelsome**

This point goes along with being gentle. A gentle person is not quarrelsome. Someone who seeks the good of others avoids quarrels. Quarrelsome people are aggressive and violent people. That doesn't mean pastors shouldn't rebuke and warn and be courageous when necessary. It means you don't look for verbal boxing matches. You rejoice with the truth. Do not give what is holy for the dogs, and do not cast your pearls before the swine, Jesus said (Matthew 7:6). Do not answer a fool according to his folly.

- **Not a lover of money**

In other words: he should not be covetous. A lover of money may times becomes a lover of getting money quickly. And if you want money fast, you

will do everything to get it! In other words, you will get it with dishonesty and deceit. Paul said the love of money is a root of all evil (See 1 Timothy 6:10 ESV). No Christian and no pastor can serve God and Mammon. You will either love one or hate the other. A pastor is a person who is content and thankful for the salary and possessions God has given him. He realizes that with nothing he came into the world, and with nothing he will go out. He looks after his family and cares for them, as Paul said, he who doesn't provide for his household is worse than an unbeliever (Read 1 Timothy 5:18 ESV), but still, he is not greedy, and Money is not his God.

### ▪ **A lover of good**

To be a lover of good means of necessity that you are a hater of evil! Paul admonishes us: Love must be genuine. Hate evil, love what is good (Read Romans 12:12). If this should be true of all Christians, how much more of pastors who should lead and be examples to the flock? Proverbs 8:13 says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Proverbs 8:13 NKJV), and we cannot hate evil, and we cannot love good unless we have a good spirit, the Holy Spirit, within us! Be therefore filled by Spirit continually and sing praises to God (Read Ephesians 5:18).

### ▪ **Upright**

Paul separates being upright and being holy in this text. Being upright is related to being holy, and being upright means hiding nothing and being truthful in all you do and say. To be upright means you are honest with God about your sins. That is the meaning in Psalm 51, “you desire truth (uprightness) in the inmost parts.” (Psalm 51:7 NKJV). David, in Psalm 51 acknowledged his sins to God and cried for forgiveness and cleansing. The same thought we get in 1 John 1:7-9. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins, but if we say we have no sin (present tense; verse 8) or if say we had not sinned (verse 10; past tense) the truth is not in us, and we make God to be a liar. Being upright means you long to do what is right in the sight of God. You have set your life, and you aim at righteousness in word, thought and deed and disposition (attitude). This is what a pastor should be like.

- **Holy**

A pastor should shun evil and every appearance of evil. A workman who is approved by God is one who thoroughly cleanses himself from all impurities so that he can be holy, separated and useful for every good work. And as said before, we cannot be holy without the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

- **Disciplined**

Like a soldier who does his duties or an athlete to win a race and does rigorous exercise and is on a strict diet, so the pastor exercises himself in holiness, studying hard and preparing his sermons and visiting the sick and weary. If we cannot be disciplined in a secular job, how can we expect to be disciplined in church life? Without discipline, we would disgrace the Name of Christ. To be a disciple means to be disciplined in all areas of life, especially your moral behavior and thoughts. Suffer hardness as a good soldier of Christ!

- **Must manage his household well, having submissive children (Children must be believers and not open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination)**

These two phrases go together. If the pastor cannot control his own household, how would he be able to control his church? If you cannot run 5 kilometers, how will you run 40 kilometers? If you cannot lift 50 kilograms, will you lift 200 kilograms? If a pastor cannot disciple and discipline his own children, how will he be able to teach and disciple and discipline the church? If the pastor's own children are given to drunkenness or immorality or vandalism and causing shame, then he will be disqualified for ministry. There will be a blemish on his reputation. If the pastor's children are rebellious, how can he care for the church of God? This is why the pastor's family is a big priority in his life. He must not neglect his family at the expense of the church. If he neglects his family, his church will suffer!

- **Not a recent convert unless he falls into the condemnation of the devil.**

The logic here is simple. If someone is a recent convert and understands sound doctrine, he can be puffed up with pride even if he is a distinguished member

of society. The devil fell because of pride, and therefore, the recent convert should be given time to mature not only in knowledge but in wisdom and virtue and godliness. Only those who have grown in the graces and fruit of the Holy Spirit should be considered for the ministry. Timothy was not a recent convert to Christianity. He knew the faith, being taught by his mother and grandmother when he was young, as the Bible tells us.

▪ **Must be well thought off by outsiders:**

Why is this important? If the pastor has a good reputation from outsiders, the cause of the gospel will go forward. If he behaves in a respectable and holy way, the gospel of Christ is honored, and the cause of the gospel will grow. That is why it is vital that before a pastor is ordained, he must have a good reputation. If we take care of our characters, our reputation will take care of itself.

So how do we know we are qualified to be a Biblical pastor or elder?

You see your life corresponds with 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

**3) How should they lead? 1 Peter 5:1-4 They model Christ.**

They should be among the people. That is what shepherds do.  
The members should see Christ in them and follow their way of life.

1 Peter 5:1-4 "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords (domineering) over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1 Peter 5:1-4 ESV).

In this text, we see that elders should lead their flocks in specific ways and not in certain ways:

1) Firstly, they should know that they will be partakers of the glory that will be revealed. And this glory will be revealed because and only because of the sufferings and atonement of Christ. This knowledge should encourage them and be their motivation for what they should do. This task that they are entrusted with is a glorious one. It's about exhibiting the glory of God.

2) Secondly, some have been entrusted to your care by God. That's what our text is saying. If you are an elder, God has qualified you to look after, oversee, God's people.

3) Thirdly, they are encouraged to **shepherd** the flock of God who is among you. Their task is shepherding, serving as overseers. This is why they are elders. **They are there to serve the people.** To look after the flock. A shepherd in ordinary life cannot shepherd if he is not among the sheep. Therefore, a shepherd must spend time among his people. He needs to know the sheep by name. He needs to visit them regularly. He needs to make sure they are healthy sheep. He is there to serve. He is a servant of the sheep: to pray for them and minister God's word to them.

4) Fourthly, how should we lead?

➤ Not by compulsion, but willingly

Being a pastor and elder is not something anyone should do because they feel forced. It should not be a drag. It should not be a chore. It is not something that you do just because it is on your to-do list for the day. Everything you do should be done for the glory of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:30), and if it is for the glory of Christ, it must be done with joy and willingly. God is not glorified when we don't do something willingly and with joy. We should count it a privilege to serve Christ.

➤ Not for dishonest gain, but eagerly

Many are the elders and pastors, and leaders in the church who are there to make as much money as they can. Oil and holy water and petrol and doom and different things are sold by the pastor to ensure "blessings". Many are there for dishonest gain. Many are there to become rich in a dishonest way. To lead a

church is not about enriching yourself at the expense of others. This is dishonoring to God and will bring swift judgment upon you.

➤ Not domineering, but as examples to the flocks

Leaders may many times fall into the trap of domineering others. Get the picture of a person in your mind of someone who is domineering. Telling a person to do this and not that, criticizing, insulting, and using harsh words. This is not the way to lead. We should be examples to the flock. The way you talk, your attitude in adversity, your joy and gratefulness, your kindness and gentleness and your way of life should be an example that others could follow.

Then, the Bible gives us this wonderful promise, “when the Chief Shepherd appears, he will give you the crown of glory that will not fade away!” God will reward us with His glory! The coming glory is our motive to lead and serve, and it is the prize for serving Him in a godly way.

4) Specific responsibilities for church leaders

❖ To encourage to commitment to the local church (church membership)

The Bible makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 12 that, as Christians, we are members of the same body. This truth was given in the context of the local church in Corinth. That means we are dependent on one another. We need each other, and each member has been given gifts to serve the rest of the body. It is also clear that church membership is a Biblical doctrine. If God has put people in a body of believers, that membership should be constituted. Without church membership, there can be no church discipline.

The task of the church leaders is to evaluate people who want to become church members by interviewing them and ensuring they qualify. Only those who have a clear testimony of God’s work of grace in their heart and those who believe in Christ and the gospel should be allowed to become church members in a local church. It is the church leader's responsibility, in conjunction with the other members of the local Church, to admit believers into Church membership.

### ❖ The practice of church discipline

The Bible gives clear guidance on the importance of the practice of church discipline. In 1 Corinthians 5, we see Paul urging the church to practice church discipline towards an immoral brother. Jesus also gave his disciples clear guidance and instructions on how to practice church discipline in Matthew 18. One of the marks of a true church is the practice of church discipline. Church discipline has the goal of restoration and not the abandonment of an individual and on keeping the church pure and holy. Church discipline can be:

- Preventative and formative or
- Corrective and restorative

Both should be practiced. The elders and the church as a whole should be involved in church discipline. Church discipline is also practiced to protect the church from false doctrine and defilement.

### ❖ The administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper)

It is evident in the Bible that God commanded the disciples, the apostles, to administer baptism (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Lord's Supper frequently (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). We see this also in the book of Acts (Acts 2:41-48). The elders of a given local church, because they are qualified for these positions, have the responsibility to baptize converts and administer the Lord's Supper.

### ❖ The importance of making disciple-making-disciples

Before Jesus went to heaven, he commanded his disciples to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). It is only disciples who can make disciples. And because church leaders are the ones who are mature disciples, they are the best qualified to make disciples in the local church and beyond. They are not the only ones in the church qualified to make disciples. In fact, every disciple should be involved in evangelism and making disciples to some degree. But church leaders, elders and pastors, because they are able to teach, should lead the way in this regard.

In the next session, we will examine how this is done in the local church.

**Sources:**

1. Strauch, A. Biblical Eldership. (1987). Chapel Library. Pensacola, Florida
2. Masters, P. Church Membership in the Bible. (2008). The Wakeman Trust. London
3. Clarke, Adam. Commentary of the Bible.
4. Dever, Mark, Nine Marks of a Healthy Church (2000). Crossway. Wheaton, Illinois.

## **8. It promotes discipleship and growth**

### **Matthews 28:16-20**

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”” (Matthew 28:16-20 ESV).

### **Introduction**

In this text, we see that God gave His disciples the command to make disciples of all nations. After God made disciples of the eleven, he sent them out by His authority to go and multiply themselves. In the Great Commission, there are a few important things to consider.

Firstly: There is a great truth. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Jesus. Therefore, the process of making disciples will be completed. The Great Commission cannot fail. No power in hell can change the purposes of God. Jesus achieved salvation on the cross, rose physically from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of power.

Secondly: In making disciples, we should baptize people in the Name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This means the essence of disciple-making is getting people intimately connected and immersed into God and fellowship with Him and into the church. The text tells us here not only to baptize people with water but into God. Because the church is the body of Christ, we baptize them also, in a sense, into the church. Without genuine conversion, discipleship is a sham!

Thirdly: We have a promise that Jesus will be with his disciples until the end of the age and world. We have the promise of unlimited resources at our disposal to complete the task of making disciples. God has poured out His Holy Spirit upon the church, and God is with us.

What making disciples is not:

- Just learning about the Bible, just acquiring knowledge
- Just going to church on Sundays
- Memorizing Scripture
- Praying in public and/or in private
- Telling people about Jesus and teaching the gospel
- Just confessing your sins

All these things that I have mentioned are essential elements in making disciples and being a disciple. Without them, there will be something lacking in the process of making disciples. But this is not the essence of being or making a disciple. The essence of being a disciple of Christ, I believe, is observing and obeying the things Jesus and God commanded, with joy or from the heart. That is what Jesus told his disciples. Jesus said, Go and make disciples, teaching them to observe or obey. But here comes the problem. Many people can outwardly acquire Bible knowledge; they can study for six years or four years at a Bible College, come to church on a Sunday for years, memorize Scripture, pray and fast twice a week, and tell people about Jesus, and even confess their sins to a brother, and even then, not be a true disciple of Christ!

Think about Judas Iscariot. He followed Jesus. He obeyed Jesus' teachings outwardly. He went out with the others, preaching about the kingdom. He probably prayed and even cast out devils and healed the sick by the Holy Spirit! But what did Jesus say about Judas? He is a devil (Read John 6:60-68). Judas never knew Jesus intimately. Judas's heart was never changed. He was an unconverted man. He obeyed Jesus outwardly but not with his heart. He was not a worshipper of Jesus. He was a false disciple, a fake disciple.

So, when we say that a Biblical church promotes discipleship, we say that the church should be the place, or one of the places, where people authentically become disciples of Christ and obey Christ as disciples, not just by doing things outwardly, things that look spiritual. The local church should be the breeding place where people become disciples and be true disciples of Christ.

The local church is the best place to help people become disciples, not just at the building but the dynamics of the local church. We are not saying that the local church is the exclusive place for discipleship. It can happen in different contexts at a school or university or on outreaches, at the workplace, or wherever discipleship occurs. But the church is a place where disciples are born and grow.

In this session, we are going to look at the following:

- ❖ **How does any person become a disciple?**
- ❖ **What is a disciple?**
- ❖ **What is discipleship?**
- ❖ **How should we make disciple-making disciples?**
- ❖ **Foster growth through spiritual disciplines**

### 1. **How do you become a disciple?**

Some people want to make us believe that you can be a disciple by just obeying a little bit of Jesus' teaching here and there. In other words, they say if you read the Bible and discuss things about the Bible and believe how you want, obey a little bit here, and pick and choose what you wish to, you are a disciple of Christ. This method of discipleship and telling people they are disciples without conversion to Christ is a recipe for disaster. No person is a genuine disciple of Christ unless he is genuinely converted to Christ. Unless a person repents of his sins and receives Christ for who He is, Lord and God of the Universe (Romans 10:13), Savior of the world (Acts 4:12), and as supreme Treasure (Matthew 13:44-46), he is not a true disciple. Unless Jesus Christ is the most important Person in your life, unless you worship Christ, unless you are willing to lose your life for Him, you are not a disciple of Christ. In Jesus' own words, unless you forsake all you have, renounce all that you have, you cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:33).

Listen to the words of Jesus for yourself:

**Matthew 16:24-26**

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26).

This text clearly indicates that we must lose our lives for Jesus’ sake to gain it. This means you must forsake your own life and your sins and worship God. You must repent of your importance and deny yourself to gain Christ, to be saved.

#### Luke 14:25-30 ESV

“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”

“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33 ESV).

Compared to God, your love for yourself, your mother, father, wife and children must seem like hate. This text doesn’t say we must hate people or our family members. God tells us to love our neighbors and our enemies. This text says we must be willing to suffer and be unpopular to be loyal to Christ. Christ must be our first love, our greatest love, our greatest treasure. We must always be willing to forsake all things to please Him. Our devotion to Him and to truth and righteousness, and holiness should trump all other commitments.

#### Matthew 13:44-46

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:44-46 ESV).

Here we see clearly, that in comparison to all that is valuable, God and Christ should be on top. He is on top. He is most valuable and precious, and because of this reality, a true disciple is willing to forsake all to have Christ as his/her treasure and indeed receives Him as the treasure of his life.

### Matthew 10:30-33

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:30-33 ESV).

## **2. What is a disciple?**

### ❖ A disciple of Christ is a lifelong learner, is humble

To be a disciple of someone commonly means that you are learning from someone and that you are a student of someone. This is what it means to be a disciple. Spiritually this means you think less of yourself and more of Christ. You see a need in yourself, and you desire to learn. You recognize your own poverty and Christ’s riches. You recognize your own deficiency and Christ’s sufficiency. Blessed are the meek and the poor in spirit, Jesus said, for unto them belong the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3,5). A disciple of Christ is not just a learner for some time. He is a lifelong learner. He remains humble and knows that Christ will always have the supremacy. He knows that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is God. Therefore, there will always be a humble disposition about a disciple. A disciple is humble and teachable because God made him so. God showed him his need for Himself.

### ❖ A disciple of Christ is a lifelong follower of Christ, imitates Christ, and obeys Christ and his teachings. What did Jesus do?

A disciple is also a lifelong follower of Jesus. When Jesus called his disciples, he called them to follow Him, to be with Him, and to do what He does. This is

what it means to follow Jesus. It is to do what Christ does. It is to obey what Jesus said. This is what Jesus said to his disciples: “teach them to obey all that I have commanded you.” The moment you start to obey Jesus and follow Jesus, you will realize that you can’t do it with your own resources and power. You need supernatural ability. Jesus wants you to act and feel and behave like Him. This is impossible unless you are born again and have the Spirit of God in you. And as Jesus said in Luke 14, unless you pay the cost and finish the course with Him, you will not be counted as a disciple.

❖ A disciple of Christ is a lifelong authentic worshipper of Christ, receives Christ, delights in Christ, treasures Christ (knows, treasures, shows Christ)

So, a disciple of Christ is someone who authentically worships Christ. We can’t do this without the Holy Spirit within us (John 4:23,24). This is what the disciples did. When Jesus rose from the dead, we read that the disciples worshipped Christ (Read Matthew 28:16). As we saw in the second session: to worship Christ is to know Him, treasure Him and to show Him.

❖ A disciple of Christ is a lifelong soldier and athlete, is disciplined

The word disciple comes from the root word “discipline.” To be a disciple is to be disciplined. Therefore, the Bible frequently compares the disciple and the Christian life to that of a soldier and being a soldier (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3) or an athlete (Hebrews 12:2; 1 Corinthians 9:27; etc.). To be a successful soldier or athlete, you must discipline your body and fleshly appetites. You must be hard on your body and deny yourself. You must be diligent, punctual, determined and motivated for the task ahead of you; otherwise, you won’t make it. A disciple of Christ is disciplined. He crucifies his flesh every day. Jesus said, if you don’t deny yourself every day and take up your cross, endure suffering, you cannot be my disciple (Luke 9:23).

❖ A disciple lives in accountability with other disciples

A disciple is not a Lone Ranger. He walks in the light as God is in the light (1 John 1:7-9). He confesses his sins to God and others when needed. He carries other people’s burdens and so fulfills the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), and he lives in the body of Christ. He knows that he needs other Christians. He belongs

to a local body of believers and the Church. The local church is the best place to carry each other's burdens.

❖ A disciple of Christ is committed to Christ and the church, not to the world or the opinions of men

He is committed to a local church and the global church because he is committed to Christ. He is committed to the purity of the church. He is not committed to the opinions of men or the lusts and things of the world. His allegiance is to Christ and his church.

❖ A disciple is a lifelong worker and farmer in God's kingdom. He makes fishers of men.

When Jesus called his disciples, he said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Many times, in Scripture, we see that Jesus said we are workers in his kingdom. He said the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (Matthew 9:35-38). He said in John 4 to his disciples that the fields are white for harvest. There is work for his disciples to do in His kingdom. We sow the seed of the word, and God makes it grow. We sow, or we harvest. We are farmers in God's Vineyard. The field is the world. And we must sow the word of God, day in and day out.

❖ A disciple of Christ becomes like Christ, resembles Christ, looks like Christ, displays Christ

The goal of discipleship is to become like Jesus (Ephesians 4:13). It's not just to follow Jesus for nothing. It's not just to obey outwardly. It's to worship Christ and in beholding His glory to become like Christ (2 Cor 3:18). We become what we delight in. We become what we behold. The goal of being a disciple is to be like Jesus, to become like Jesus, and then to display Jesus to those around you. The glory of God is the goal, and that goal becomes a reality when we look like Christ and display Christ to each other and the world. The fruit of the Spirit on display is the goal of discipleship (John 15:8).

❖ A disciple reproduces himself by grace

Someone once said:

Discipleship is not complete until the disciple makes disciples.

This is true. Jesus made disciples so that the disciples could continue what he started (Matthew 28:18-20). If you don't have the goal of reproducing yourself by the grace of God and by the power of God, your life will be meaningless. The reason God makes you like Jesus is so that you may make more disciples to be like Jesus.

### 3. What is discipleship?

Discipleship is the continual, lifelong process whereby unbelievers become disciples of Christ, live (obey and follow) as disciples of Christ, become more like Christ, display Christ, and make more disciples of Christ: It is the process whereby people:

- ❖ Learn about Christ
- ❖ Follow and obey Christ
- ❖ Worship Christ
- ❖ Become disciplined
- ❖ Live accountable lives with other disciples
- ❖ Are committed to Christ and His church
- ❖ Works with Christ in His Vineyard
- ❖ Become like Christ and display Christ
- ❖ Reproduces themselves, and make more disciples

And we are saying, in the local church, not exclusively, but essentially, the church, the local church, is the best place where disciples are being made and where disciples grow to become more like Christ, display Christ, and make more disciples.

### 4. How should we make disciple-making disciples?

- ❖ Through teaching and preaching to follow and obey Jesus joyfully

Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that He commanded. In the previous sessions, we saw the supremacy that the Word of God should have in our lives because it is the source of our soul-satisfaction and salvation. It is the Rock and Foundation of our lives. The Bible is the ultimate authority over our lives. And once we have established the supremacy of the Word of God over all our lives, we realize to declare and teach the word is the primary means through which the saints and disciples grow and become more like Jesus. The word is able to build us up and make us grow (1 Peter 2:3) as we see and behold the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor 4:14-16). Jesus commanded us to teach and preach the word. Jesus taught the word and preached the word, and that was the way he made disciples. So, we can say the public ministry of the word is the primary way Jesus made disciples.

❖ Through counselling to follow and obey Jesus joyfully

But then we also see in the gospels that people came privately to Jesus (John 3,4) to ask him questions. Jesus counselled many people in Israel and taught and expounded the word of God to the people. Paul also counselled many people during the last years of his life (See Acts 28). So, another way to make disciples is through counselling. In counselling, we pray for disciples and teach the word of God. But it is more personal. A word of caution here. Many ministers have ruined their ministries by counselling women in private. The best advice I can give is that if you counsel a woman, let your wife be with you or take another brother with you. Do not give the devil an opportunity to tempt you. Don't counsel a woman behind a closed door. Don't be alone with a woman in counselling sessions. It is not wise.

❖ Through modelling. Set the example, in word and deed and attitude.

One of the best ways to disciple others is by spending time with people, by modelling or showing them how to live the Christian life. Jesus didn't teach us from the sky. He didn't have a pulpit in heaven thundering his precepts from above. He became one of us, and he spent time with the disciples, and he walked and talked and ate with them. In some circles, people call it the "incarnation approach". You must know the culture, the language, and the manner and customs of the people you are discipling. That is what Jesus did.

He became one of us. Jesus learnt the culture of the people that he disciplined. He spoke their language. He ate with them; he walked with them. He showed them how to react to provocations and temptations and interrogations and all sorts of situations. He modelled and showed them how to live a perfect, godly life so that they could imitate Him. And that is the way to disciple. You must be with people and spend time with people, sometimes days, and weeks and months and years. They must see your manner of life and how you react to temptation and provocations and suffering and injustices. You must show them how to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

❖ Help your members to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts. Recognizing people's spiritual gifts and graces and affirming them verbally, and discouraging and correcting wrong behavior, speech and attitudes.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that to each member of the body, God has given a gift for the benefit of all. This is very important to realize as a pastor and leader of the church. We become disciples to be useful in God's kingdom. So, it is vital as a leader to help the members in the body, in your local church, to identify their spiritual gifts and to affirm them because we all have a role to play in making disciples. We have to recognize each other's gifts and affirm those gifts when we see them in the body. And we must do this verbally so that the different members may be encouraged to use them more and more and develop them further. In this way, you help your members to be of benefit to others in the body. The eye cannot say to the ear, "I have no need of you!" No, we are interdependent on one another in the local church. And even more critical is to affirm the work of grace or the graces that God has worked in individuals in the church. When people exhibit patience and kindness and joy and goodness and love and humility, we ought to affirm these verbally and encourage our brothers and sisters to press on in the faith. It is a tremendous encouragement if a brother or sister or a pastor affirms and recognizes your graces even more than your spiritual gifts.

Also, we should discourage and correct sinful behavior, ideas, beliefs and attitudes when we see them in people. This is how we disciple our children, isn't it?

### ❖ Create opportunities for service and teaching in the church and outreach

To help your people to exercise their gifts and display their graces, and to be involved in making disciples, the elders of the church have to create opportunities in the church, in the community, and in the world to serve Christ and teach the gospel and model Christianity. The elders of the church have to take the lead here and create opportunities for service and evangelism. This will differ from church to church, depending on its size and resources. But this is the way to make disciples. When we serve together, we see the good and bad things in our lives. We get connected, and so we can rebuke, correct and show each other what it means to be disciples of Christ, and in the process, we make disciples. When we are busy with projects, we sharpen each other. Iron sharpens iron. During these times, we get shaken, and many times we have sinful reactions and attitudes and even words. When there is a lot of pressure, sometimes the worst comes out of a person or the best. But then there are opportunities to help and teach and pray for one another.

Pastor, elder of the Church, what opportunities do you give your church members to serve the community and the church?

Are you helping them to discover their gifts and graces?

Are you affirming their gifts and graces verbally?

Do you encourage them to serve and evangelize?

### 5. Grow through spiritual disciplines

We grow as disciples, and we become better disciples through spiritual disciplines. These include Bible study and meditation, prayer, obeying the Word, attending church, accountability, service and evangelism, the global church, teaching, modelling, rebuke and correction.

### ❖ Commitment to personal Bible reading and study (knowing God)

Pastor, how do you help your people to study and read the Bible?

Do you help them with a Bible program?

Do your people meditate on the word day and night?  
Do they see the importance of thinking God's thoughts?  
Do they renew their minds with the word of God?  
Do they get their energy from the Word?  
Does the Word of God generate excitement and power in their lives, or is it the soap operas or the daily gossip?

❖ Commitment to obey God's will (Matthew 28:16-20) (obeying)

We only grow when we obey God's word. Do not deceive yourself. Bible study is not an end in itself. We get knowledge about God to love Him better and worship and obey Him faithfully.

We must have this commitment and say: I will do anything, and go anywhere, whatever the cost, to follow and obey Jesus Christ!

❖ Commitment to personal, family (if possible) and local church prayer (fellowship with God and enjoying God)

Do you impress upon your people to have regular quiet times with God?  
Do your people see the utmost importance of having personal quiet times with God and with their families?  
Pastor, do you have a quiet time with your wife and children?  
Are you enjoying your quiet times with God?  
Do you sense his presence and nearness?  
Or are there unconfessed sins in your life?  
Your people will never grow unless they have sweet fellowship with God from day to day. They will not overcome their sins if they don't spend time with God alone.

❖ Commitment to the local church family (Church membership)

We said earlier that it is the obligation of each Christian to commit to a local body of believers. As 1 Corinthians 12 tells us, if one member is honored, all rejoice. If one member suffers, all suffer. Each one in the body is important and has a function. It is Biblical and essential that each Christian commits to a local body. The foot cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you". We grow

in relationships. We grow as a family. What happens to that branch that is broken off the vine? It withers! What happens to that log that is taken out of the fire? It dies!

❖ Commitment to be accountable and walk in the light

“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2 NKJV).  
“Confess your trespasses to one another that you may be healed” (James 5:16 NKJV).

❖ Commitment to service, witness and evangelism

Are we sharing the gospel with strangers? Are we serving God with our gifts?  
Are we showing hospitality to strangers? (Eph 5:16; Heb 13:1,3).

❖ Commitment to the global church family

“Let us do good to all everyone, and especially to those of the household of faith.” ESV (Gal 6:12)  
“Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them.” (Hebrews 13:3 ESV)

❖ Commitment to teaching and modelling (passing on)

Learning more about the word and passing it on. Growing in grace and showing others Christlikeness.

❖ Commitment to giving and receiving rebuke and correction.

## **9. It is world-mission minded**

### **The Great Truth, the Great Commission and the Great Promise**

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”” (Matthew 28:16-20).

#### **Introduction**

In this session, we want to show that a Biblical church is not parochial. As we saw in the first session, God’s church is global throughout all generations. There are believers in every country on the earth, and we, as pastors and leaders of God’s church, should feel one with our brothers and sisters in other churches and other countries and other ethnic groups. If we only focus on our local church and the growth of our own local church and ignore other churches and believers, we will become sick. God has people in all ethnic groups.

We are saying in this session that an essential feature of a Biblical church is that it is world-mission-minded because God is world-mission-minded. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16 ESV). He didn’t only love our church or our neighborhood or our country; he loved the world. Christ gave His life to people in all ethnic groups. And if we are Christians, we ought to have God’s vision for the world. There are so many yet to be reached with the gospel. So many people are on the way to destruction and headed to hell. There are so many people who are in bondage to sin and Satan and self, and we have the cure for the sick and direction for the lost.

As Charles Spurgeon said: “Have you no desire for others to be saved? Then be sure of this: You are not saved yourself!”

In this passage of Matthew 28:16-20, we see a great truth, a great commission and a great promise.

## 1. The Great Truth

Jesus is the Messiah, God, who accomplished salvation through His perfect life, death and resurrection, and He is worthy to be worshipped! This means: “All authority has been given unto Him, in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV).

This is an immense truth. Without the gospel, the good news of salvation, there would be no great Commission. God sent His Son to this world to save sinners like you and me. He loved the world, and because of His love, there is hope for a dying world. The great truth is Christ **has** conquered death; Christ **has** conquered sin. Christ **has** defeated Satan. There is hope for people in this world. This world is not the end. Death is not the end. New heavens and a new earth are coming, and only by faith in Christ can we be safe and secure. Christ has entered this world to save sinners, to gather for Himself a people. All authority has been given unto Him. He has conquered.

## 2. The Great Commission

### ■ The who?

- It is God’s Mission for His church. Missio Dei, Missio Ecclesia. God sent Jesus to the world to save His people and now he is sending the church to proclaim the gospel of salvation. Jesus said, “As the Father sent Me, so I am sending you.” (John 20:21 ESV).
- It is great because it is God’s mission to the world. It’s God’s mission given to the whole church. It’s about the whole church being involved. It’s about the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.
- All Christians are involved in some way. This Commission was given to the eleven disciples, but there were more than eleven disciples even in Jesus’ day. There were 120 in the upper room at Pentecost. The Mission of God is not just for some super-spiritual disciples or a particular category of disciples. All Christians must be involved in the Great Commission because we have all received the Holy Spirit and are,

therefore, in a foreign land sent into this world to make a difference and an enduring impact.

- Some misunderstand the meaning of disciple. Some think it can mean someone can be a disciple of Jesus but not converted, not born again by the Spirit of God. But that is just not possible. Some may think of Judas and say that he was a disciple of Christ. Yes, but not a true one. So, we have to have a category of false disciples, name disciples of Christ, fake disciples. This command was not given to fake, false disciples but to true disciples of Christ. Judas Iscariot was not there at Pentecost to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- It's non-negotiable. If you are a disciple, then you are a believer and, therefore, a learner, one who learns of Christ. And if you have learned from Christ, obeyed Christ, and believe in Christ, then you ought to pass on what you have learned from him! If you are not doing that, you disobey Christ's command.

#### ■ The what?

- It is a comprehensive, total mission. God's authority is over every facet of human existence. Therefore, the mission of God to go should include disciples going into every aspect of human life, into the sphere of education, the arena of politics, sport, the arts, business, law enforcement, military, health care, engineering, science and technology, administration, transport, environmental care, etc.
- It's about worshipping the right God! (Matthew 28:17,17)

After the disciples saw Jesus on the mountain, they worshipped Him. This is what missions are essentially all about. We want people to worship the true and right God. Missions exist because the worship of the true God does not exist everywhere and among all peoples and individuals across the world! (Quoted from John Piper, in his book "Let the Nations be Glad.") Missions are not ultimate. The worship of God is ultimate. Missions are there because the worship of God is not everywhere. One day when the saints are in glory there

will be no need for missions anymore for all in heaven will be saved, but we will continue to worship God for all eternity, therefore, worship is ultimate.

- It's about the coming of God's kingdom! (Matthew 6:9-11)

It is not just about the growth of the church; it is about taking Christ to the world and about being light and salt in the world.

- It's about Christ sending His people "go, therefore" "Having gone" to make disciples.

When you read Matthew 28:18-20, you will see that Jesus did not give a command to go; the verb is in the participle tense. In Greek the text reads: "Having gone, make disciples". In other passages like the parable of the wedding feast, in Matthew 22, we find the imperative to go, but not here in Matthew 28. Jesus assumed that his disciples would always be going because of His finished work. It should be an anomaly for a disciple not to be always going to make disciples.

- It's about **being** disciples; it's about observing and obeying God.

Before we make disciples and teach people to obey God's commandments, we should obey his commandments. We should live what we teach.

- It's about going places! "Go" "to all ethnic groups."

Jesus said we must make disciples of all nations. The word translated as nations is actually "ethne" ethnic groups. We are not just commanded to go to different countries but to different ethnic groups. There are many more ethnic groups than there are countries. God wants us to go to every culture and every ethnic group and make disciples.

- It's about knowing cultures, crossing borders and learning languages!

The Great Commission will never be completed unless we decide to deny ourselves and spend hours and hours and months and years learning new languages, learning new cultures and leaving our comfort zones and taking

time to forget ourselves for the sake of making Christ and the gospel known. It will never be completed unless we do this. We must make the decision, and we, as local churches, must be outward focus. We must have set times for local outreach. Local evangelism should be a priority, and we should have a plan to adopt a least evangelized people group or groups and intentionally reach that group or groups. If we don't have a global vision, we are disobedient.

- It's about making disciples "make disciples."

Nobody can be a disciple unless they have been converted to Christ. Unless they repent of their sins and believe in Christ, nobody is a disciple.

Mark 16:15 "evangelizing." Nobody will become a disciple of Christ unless they hear about the gospel. And nobody is going to listen to the gospel unless we decide to get out of our comfort zones and choose to share the gospel with strangers (Romans 10:14,15). People get saved when they believe in the gospel being preached.

Luke 24:46, "calling people to repentance", "announcing forgiveness."

Acts 1:8, "witnessing" by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- It's about forming and building relationships in various contexts with believers and unbelievers.

--The contexts of making disciples are different  
-- (at Home)  
-- (at your job)  
-- (at church)  
-- (at schools, universities) etc.

- It's about baptizing people, forming churches, growing churches.

Jesus commanded us to make disciples and baptize them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By baptism, believers identify with Christians and Christ. Baptism is a public declaration that someone is a Christian and belongs to the church. Baptism also symbolizes our union with Christ, that our old man

has died with Christ and that we have been raised to new life in Christ. So, the Great Commission is about planting churches and growing churches.

- It's about contextualizing the gospel without compromising the gospel.

The gospel must be relevant to the culture we are working in. But the gospel must not be changed or diluted. When we work in different cultures, we must always make a distinction between the good things and the evil things in a given culture. In every culture, some things are evil, and some are neutral, making that specific culture unique. And as we bring the gospel into a culture, we must bring it in a package that the people will understand and appreciate the gospel, like Hudson Taylor, who dressed like the Chinese and ate what the Chinese ate so that he would not give the impression that the gospel is a Western phenomenon. The gospel always brings with it an offence because, in every culture, there are evil things we have accepted. In Western culture, we have accepted evolutionism and alcohol abuse and abortion on demand and sexual immorality as acceptable doctrines and behaviors. This doesn't mean they are acceptable. We have made idols of work and success and sport and music and entertainment and individualism. This doesn't mean these idols are acceptable in God's sight. In African culture, we have made idols of our ancestors and nature, and the common good. This doesn't mean we must embrace what the Bible calls sin. We must strip the gospel from its Western trappings and make it relevant to each culture we encounter without changing the gospel and without diluting the gospel. The gospel must always stay the same. There is only one gospel and woe to us if we change the gospel and preach a different gospel than what the apostles preached (See Galatians 1:5-9).

- It's about teaching them to observe and obey ALL Jesus have commanded!

But remember, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, so whatever the Father commanded us to do, so did the Son, and when God gave us the Holy Spirit and directed us through the apostles, through the Scriptures, Jesus was also involved. Therefore, when Jesus said to teach people to observe or obey all that He had commanded, it refers to the totality of the moral law found in the entire Old and New Testaments.

This is a major task. The Great Commission has to do with teaching, teaching the next generation to obey and observe all that God commanded us to do. This is what God has called us to do!

- It's about pursuing justice, righteousness and showing mercy.

The Great Commission has to do with the pursuit of righteousness. If we are followers of Christ, we must ask ourselves this question repeatedly: Is this the right thing to do? And when we see injustice, we ought to, by the ability of God, fight for what is right.

Our God is a God of mercy. If we obey God's commandments, we ought to commit ourselves to reflect His character. We ought to devote ourselves to give and show compassion to others, to the weak and elderly and the sick and those who suffer. This was the example of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the plight of the oppressed and sick and the weak and vulnerable, we ignore the Great Commission.

- The Cultural Mandate is included (Genesis 1:27,28)

It's bigger than our church or our church affiliation or those who are like-minded to us! The Great Commission is about coming of the kingdom! The Great Commission includes looking after our planet's natural resources: the air, the sea, the animals, the minerals etc.

- How far have we come? (Joshua Project: March 2023)

People Groups:

17,443

Unreached Groups:

7,425

% Unreached Groups:

42.6%

Population:

7.93 billion

Population in Unreached:

3.37 billion  
% Population in Unreached:  
42.5%

**Unreached groups lack enough followers of Christ and resources to evangelize their own people.**

It's not only about unreached people groups and least evangelized groups; it's about making disciples of every people and ethnic group.

What still needs to be done?

**▪ The Why?**

- Christ's authority—God commanded and commands his church to go and make disciples. We should be concerned about God's mission because if we don't, we are disobeying God. And disobedience is a sin that need to be repented of.
- Christ's purpose—It has been God's plan and purpose for the world from the beginning of the world, to save his people not only from the descendants of Israel but from all ethnic groups. In Ephesians 3, Paul calls it God's eternal purpose. That God would save his people from all ethnic groups was decreed by God in eternity past. In theology we call it the covenant of redemption. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit made a covenant between themselves to create and redeem a people for Himself that would worship Him before the world was created (See Ephesians 1:4,5; Revelation 13:8; 18:8; 1 Peter 1:20).

Read Genesis 12:1-3.

Read Psalm 47.

Read Psalm 67.

Read Revelation 5:9, 7:9.

- Judgement Day is coming; the wrath of God in all its fury is coming and if people have not become Christ's disciples they will be condemned

forever for their unbelief and sin and cast into hell where they will be punished forever and ever (See Revelation 20:11-15).

➤ God's love compels us.

Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:11-15 that the love of God compelled Him to preach the gospel to the lost and Corinthians and so should the love of God compel us to reach the world with the gospel.

➤ The need— the kingdom of darkness, truth is needed!

- ❖ Idolatry in its million forms
- ❖ The depraved heart that lusts for power, money and self and sexual immorality
- ❖ Worldliness (1 John 2:17-19)
- ❖ False religions and deceptions:
- ❖ Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism,
- ❖ Secular Humanism, Atheism, Communism, Evolutionism
- ❖ Animism and Spiritism
- ❖ Roman Catholicism
- ❖ Pentecostalism
- ❖ The Wealth, Health and Prosperity Cult
- ❖ The Sects and the Cults
- ❖ The Occult

**The How? The necessity of your involvement!**

There is no other plan to reach the world! God will not call the Angels or the animals to complete this mission. And the unbelievers cannot complete it! They are morally and spiritually unable. It is the church that must and will complete the mission.

There is much wisdom needed. Jesus said, “I send you as sheep among wolves” and “Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16 ESV). Lots

of training is necessary, and lots of consultation and partnerships before this task can be completed.

Where do we start? You may ask: How can my small church, which is financially not well off, be involved in this wonderful task? Commit to Christ to:

- **Pray** (Matthew 9:35-38) for the nations and reach the remaining ethnic groups. There are many good books and mission organizations that can give you good information about the countries and ethnic countries of the world. A few of these are Operation World, Joshua Project, Voice of the Martyrs and Open Doors just to name a few. Pray also for specific missionaries that work on the field.
- **Give** (Matthew 6:1-10) money, resources, time and talents. To finish the Great Commission, we need resources and money to go to places and keep missionaries and church planters on the field.
- **Mobilize** (send). Churches ought to be involved in training elders for missionary service that will devote their lives to preaching the gospel. Churches are the primary agencies that should send missionaries across the world. They should also work with mission organizations that help with logistical support to keep missionaries on the field.
- **Go** – Short-term trips. Short term trips can expose many members of churches to the need that exist on the field. It can also be helpful to support churches by training leaders or evangelism in an area.
- **Go** -- Long term trips. The focus in missions should be on church planting and church strengthening. In order to plant Biblical churches, missionaries need to stay on the field for longer periods, years, and sometimes decades to ensure Biblical churches have been planted and leaders have been trained.
- **Train** – Leadership Training is part of Missions because churches need qualified pastors to lead and shepherd God’s people. Theological institutions that train people are useful as well as other organizations and

institutions like, African Pastors' Conferences that provide books at low costs, Seminars, and Workshops and other institutions like Ligonier etc.

What are your spiritual gifts? What is your passion for God? God does not necessarily work through these because many times we need to do what God wants us to do, but God many times work through our spiritual gifts. There are many places we can shine our light for God:

- Relief work—mercy ministries
- Evangelism, teaching – kids, youth, adults, your family
- Internet, media ministries, etc. (Global Media Outreach; Facebook Pages)
- Church planting
- Administration
- Support roles, Member Care, Educational Consultancy
- Logistics
- Education
- Finances
- Bible translation (Wycliffe) etc.
- Fighting for justice and righteousness E.g., the pro-life-movement

### **3. The great promise (Matthew 28:18-20)**

“Behold, I am with you until the end of the age.”

After Jesus gave His disciples and his church this commission, He promised to be with His people until the end of the age. This is the greatest encouragement for us. The most outstanding comfort for Christians is that God will be with us. Yes, we will suffer. There will be tribulations. There will be obstacles. There will be tears and heartache. But in it all, the Holy Spirit is with us, Jesus Christ is with us, and the Father is with us. And because the omnipotent One is with us, we have hope! We get strength, and we get peace, and we have joy because we know God is with us. The whole earth can be against us, and Satan and all his demons can be against us, but still, we have hope and strength because God is with us. If God is with us, who can be against us? Let us then say with William Carey!

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God!”

Because God is with us, the mission will not fail! It cannot fail. God’s elect will be gathered in. The gospel will go out. God will thrust out His laborers into all ethnic groups. May we as individuals and local churches, be involved, actively involved in this wonderful, glorious enterprise.

God will supply the power and energy, and strategy.

Trust God to supply your every need and obey! (Matthew 6:33)

Go, therefore! “Having gone, make disciples!”

**Resources:**

1. Piper, J. (2011). Let the Nations be Glad. Crossway
2. Mandryk. J. (2010). Operation World.
3. Johnstone, P. (2011). The Future of the Global Church.
4. Johnstone, P. (2013). Serving God in today’s cities.
5. Keller, T. (2008). Centre Church.
6. Coalition on Revival. Christian Liberty Books.

# The Mission of the Church

## a) Reflecting the character of Christ

“Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:15-18 ESV)

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:1-6 ESV)

### **Introduction:**

Our Conference deals with the Mission of the church. The title before us is: Reflecting the character of Christ. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the reason God saves, the reason God chooses for Himself a people, the reason why God reconciles us to Himself, the reason there is something like a church, is because God wants people to come to the unity of the faith, to the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the statute of the fullness of Christ (Ef 4:13). God wants people who are like Christ. That is the reason He

created. That is the reason Jesus came to this earth. To make us righteous and holy and loving and pure and good. We were not by nature good and holy and righteous. We know what happened in the garden of Eden. Sin came into the world and death by sin and because of our forefather Adam we are not like Christ, we are like the devil. We are boastful, proud, arrogant, egotistical, lustful, greedy, seeking for power, possessions, liars, thieves and vainglorious.

God wants us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt in its natural forms preserves food. It gives taste. It brings health. That is what Christians are supposed to do. Preserve holiness and righteousness. Keep the world from rotting and decaying. Christians should bring the light of salvation and bring people to the light and shine with the glory of God. The reason why God saves us, is so that we may exhibit the nature of Christ for all eternity.

But we know no-one can exhibit God unless they are like God. And no one can become like Christ unless they know Christ, unless they behold the glory of Christ. So, in this message I want to look at four things.

Firstly: What is Christ like? We need to know Christ before we can become like Him. Secondly, what do I mean by beholding Christ? Thirdly conforming to the image of Christ and then, fourthly, reflecting the character of Christ.

- 1. What is the character of Christ?**
- 2. Beholding Christ**
- 3. Conforming to the image of Christ**
- 4. Reflecting the character of Christ**

- 1. What is the character of Christ?**

Hebrews 1:3 reveals to us that Jesus Christ is the express image of God, or the exact representation of the Father.

When Thomas asked Jesus, show us the Father, Jesus replied, he who sees Me sees the Father (John 14:1-12). In other words, if we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. Jesus and the Father are One. Their character is

identical. Jesus Christ came to declare the Father (John 1:18). He came to exhibit the nature of God in a perfect manner consistently.

So, when we ask, what is the character of Jesus? We ask, what is the character of God?

### How can we know God? Where do we find knowledge of God?

The answer of course is twofold, in general revelation and special revelation. In nature and providence, we get to know God. Romans 1:18-22 tells us that God's eternal power and divine attributes are clearly perceived by the things that He has made. God's wrath, God's power, God's mercy, God's goodness, God's wisdom, God's immensity are all known by all men. We look at the stars and the sun and the oceans and we see immensity, greatness. We hear of thunderstorms and hurricanes and lightning and behold God's power. We look at the mountains and we see power. We behold animal life and insect life, and the creatures God has made, and we see wisdom and intelligence. We look at ecosystems and the human body and we see wisdom and intelligence. We see how plants and crops grow and rain falling, and food production and we see God's goodness and care and mercy. We see death in the world, we see war and sicknesses and we see the effects of sins and we see God's wrath and judgement on display. The whole world is a theatre of God, where his attributes are constantly on display. But unfortunately, we can't know God savingly by just observing and studying nature. We need verbal propositions from God, we need God to act on our behalf to know God savingly. We need words from God, infallible words, words of truth, words of love, words of righteousness, words of salvation.

In the Bible we find God's words, God's acts, his redemptive acts and his covenants with man, and in the Bible, we get to know God intimately and redemptively. God has spoken. God has acted and we have the record in history, we have been given the Bible through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible we find promises and prophecies about Christ, and we find the story of Christ. We find the gospel. God came down to save His people from their

sins. And in the gospel and in the whole Bible we see the character of God and Christ on display like in no other place.

### So, what is the character of Christ? Who is God?

Here follows a short summary:

- ❖ God is holy (Isaiah 6:1-8)
- ❖ God is righteous and true (Psalm 94-99)
- ❖ God is love (1 John 4:19)
- ❖ God is merciful (Ex 34:5,6)
- ❖ God is gracious (Ex 34:5,6)
- ❖ God is good (Ps 145)
- ❖ God is humble (Mt 11:28)
- ❖ God is patient (2 Pet 3:9)
- ❖ God is kind (Romans 2:1-5)
- ❖ God is faithful (1 Cor 10:13)
- ❖ God is peace (Phil 4:8,9)
- ❖ God is all-wise (1 Timothy 6)
- ❖ God is eternal (Ps 90:1,2)
- ❖ God is infinite (Genesis 1,2)
- ❖ God is immutable, unchangeable (James 1:16,17)
- ❖ God is omnipresent (Ps 139:7-12)
- ❖ God is omnipotent (Mt 28:18)
- ❖ God is omniscient (Ps 139:1-6)
- ❖ God is glorious (Rev 4:11)
- ❖ God is beautiful (Ps 48:1,2)
- ❖ God is majestic (Ps 93)
- ❖ God is King of kings (Rev 19)
- ❖ God is High Priest (Heb 7)
- ❖ God is Prophet (John 6)
- ❖ God is Creator (Gen 1:1; John 1:1-3)
- ❖ God is One and Three, the Trinity (Mat 28:18)
- ❖ God is Spirit (John 4:23,24)
- ❖ Christ is God (Mt 1:21-23)

- ❖ Christ is the Godman (John 1:1-3,14)

Christ's character refers to who He is, his nature. To know God is to know Christ and to know Christ is to know God.

When we say the mission of the church is to reflect or exhibit or display Christ, we mean his communicable attributes. In a sense we can never share completely in his omniscience or omnipresence or in his creative power. God is much greater than us. God is much more intelligent than us. We will never be God. We will never achieve God-status. We will never have the power to create as God has created. We will never be able to know all things of all people like God does. God is infinite and eternal. He has no beginning. We had a beginning. We were created. But God has no beginning or end. God has being in himself. He has aseity. We exist because of God. When we say we must become like Christ and reflect the character of Christ we mean we must reflect his communicable attributes:

- ❖ His love
- ❖ His holiness
- ❖ His righteousness
- ❖ His wisdom
- ❖ His peace
- ❖ His joy
- ❖ His kindness
- ❖ His goodness
- ❖ His humility
- ❖ His faithfulness
- ❖ His patience
- ❖ His self-control

That is the mission of the church! That is why we exist as a church.

So how do we come to this state of existence, of reflecting God?

## **2. Beholding Christ**

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:4-6 ESV)

Our text here reveals a few things:

- 1) That to be transformed into the image of God, we need to behold the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18)
- 2) The glory of God is the glory of Christ in the gospel (2 Cor 4:4)
- 3) The gospel of the glory of Christ is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4)
- 4) This glory comes to humans through preaching Christ (2 Cor 4:5)
- 5) This glory that changes come through knowledge of the gospel and the work of the Spirit (2 Cor 4:6; 2 Cor 3:18)

So, the things that I am saying here, is that the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit works together to change us to the image of Christ. The Father has called us to become conformed to the image of God (Romans 8:29). He has predestinated us to become conformed to the image of Christ. God has called us effectually, irresistibly, by the preaching of the gospel and by the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has regenerated us (John 3:3-6), made us alive and granted us faith (Ef 2:8) and repentance (Acts 11:18). When he called us, he justified us by faith in the work of the gospel (Rom 8:30). God shone into our hearts; he showed us the glory of Christ in the gospel. It was irresistible, and now when God justified us, he will glorify us. But in a sense, we are already glorified. We have received the Spirit of God. We have been baptized as the

church into the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). We have been set apart, called out of this world, to belong to Christ. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world. When we beheld Christ in the gospel, when God gave us knowledge of the truth, when God revealed to us the good news, the gospel, and took the veil of our eyes, we were changed and transformed. But this was just the beginning.

Our text says, that as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are being changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). So, to be changed into the likeness of Christ is what we call sanctification. That is a lifelong process. It never stops in this life. We are sanctified positionally by Christ as we receive the Spirit but then we are being sanctified more and more throughout our lives.

And how does that happen? By beholding the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ in the gospel. And we do this through knowledge, understanding. Not by dreams and visions. Or going into trances. By abiding in the gospel, in the word, and beholding the glory of God in His word, in the gospel, we are being changed and transformed.

John 15:3-5 states: “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:3-5 ESV).

Romans 12:1,2 ““I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2 ESV).

Not all people see this glory. The Bible explicitly says that the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers that they may not see the glory of

God, the glory of Christ. For unbelievers the cross of Christ is foolishness. The fame and fortune and things of the world are glorious to them.

Paul prays to the Ephesian believers and says: ““For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might” (Ephesians 1:15-19 ESV). To behold the glory of God, means to abide in Christ and in His word and to be captivated by Christ.

It means you see with the eyes of faith the glory of Christ and you are thrilled by it; Christ satisfies you; He fulfills you and His glory enriches your soul.

You are drawn to this glory repeatedly.

You want more of it, more and more until you see Him face to face!

### **3. Conforming to the image of Christ**

When we are captivated by Christ, when we have continual communion with Christ, in His word, with His people, and the word of God cleanses us, and our faith is strengthened, and we obey God’s commandments to love one another we become more and more like Jesus Christ.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:3-5 ESV)

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.”  
(John 15:9-10 ESV)

As we said earlier, we cannot expect to become like Jesus Christ if we fill our hearts and minds with the things of the world. When the filthy talk and immoral jokes and lewd pictures of the world and the philosophies of the world fill our minds, we cannot expect to become like Jesus Christ. We cannot be conformed to the image of God when we love the world, we must hate the things of this world, the lusts of this world and pleasures of this world. We must renounce the deeds of darkness, pornography, fornication, sexual immorality, hero worship, idol- worship, gossip, slander, covetousness, drunkenness, and the like. We were called to holiness and righteousness.

This is the mission of the church. To become like Jesus in holiness and righteousness. This is why God saved you. This is why He called us. This is why He gave you the Spirit of Christ, to become holy as He is holy.

When we conform to Christ's image, we are ready to display the image of Christ and only then.

We know as Christians to become more like Jesus is not a quick fix. It is not something that happens in a year or three years. It happens over time, the moment when you become a Christian, you are set apart, sanctified unto God, for His glory. But the real battle only starts then, when you surrender to Christ, when you receive the Spirit. There is much conflict to go through. The flesh desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh (See Galatians 5:16). But there must be progression and growth.

We need to confess our sins regularly, renounce the works of darkness and walk in the light, use the means of grace and obey God and his commandments.

#### **4. Reflecting the character of Christ**

So, what do we reflect?

- The character of Christ:
- The character of the Spirit.

There are several lists in the Bible, Galatians 5:22,23 is one. Matthew 5:3-12 is another. 2 Peter 1:3-11 is another.

Firstly, we have to say the fruit of the Spirit forms a unit, they go together. We cannot say that some Christians have love and peace and others have righteousness and humility. All Christians have to a certain measure of all the elements of the fruit of the Spirit. They are like segments in an orange. They are like different parts in a body. Like different parts of a motorcar. You can differentiate between the segments but one or two or five segments doesn't make up an orange. All the segments must be there. The human body doesn't only consist of arms and legs and ears and noses. There are many parts to the human body and many organs and systems within the body and all of them must be present to make a human being. So, it is with us, all these elements must be present to make a Christian. Christians must exhibit all these things:

Love:

Joy:

Peace:

Kindness:

Goodness:

Patience:

Faithfulness:

Humility:

Self-control:

Righteousness:

Holiness:

Wisdom:

And as we said before it is only when you are united to Christ that you can reflect the nature of Christ. It works like a mirror. When you put a mirror in

the sun, it reflects the brightness to another area. The mirror must be turned towards the sun, to reflect the sun. If you put the mirror in a house or under a chair it won't reflect the sun. In the same manner: when we behold Christ, when we turn our lives away from the world towards Christ, when we fix our being towards God and abide in Christ, we will be able to show forth, exhibit and reflect Christ. This is essential. When God has changed us, we will reflect that change. We behold Christ in the Scriptures. When we see Jesus, teaching, healing, saving, calming a storm, forgiving an adulterer, showing compassion, giving food to the hungry, casting out demons and delivering people from oppression we are transformed. We see His glory in the Scriptures and as we see that glory the Holy Spirit transforms us into the same image.

**Righteousness:** Desiring God with the whole heart, with an undivided heart. Having a passion for Christ and His glory. Doing, saying, desiring, hungering after what is right and honorable.

**Holiness:** Moral perfection, a state of sinlessness and glory. Only God has ultimate holiness. He is different from anything and anyone. Angels are holy and sinless, but they don't have the holiness of God. God's holiness is unsurpassable. There is no blemish in his character, no fault, no evil intention, no deceit, no corruption, only righteousness and what would benefit others for their greatest good.

**Wisdom:** Knowing what to do and say and be, that what would be of greatest good for all concerned. Ability to make good and right choices for oneself and others.

**Love:** The ability to care for another person and to seek the benefit of others. Love rejoices in the truth. Love bears and endures all things. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. Love is long-suffering. Love is kind. Love does not keep a record of wrong. Love is forgiving. Love is not just a decision to lay down your life for other people. Love is a disposition of the heart. It is the ability to have empathy with another. It is the ability to listen and care for others and seek their benefit, not just temporal benefits, but eternal benefits. Therefore love shares the gospel of salvation with others, because it is only through faith in

Christ that people can be saved. Love causes us to pray for others to be saved, persistently, because it is only through beholding Christ that any person can receive the Holy Spirit. To love God and others are gifts wrought in a person by the Holy Spirit. No one can truly love another except through union with Christ and the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). We love because we have first been loved by Christ (1 John 4:19).

**Joy**: Knowing you have eternal life and it will last. Knowing your sins have been dealt with in Christ. Being satisfied and fulfilled in Christ and God. Being content with what you have in Christ and the Holy Spirit.

**Peace**: Having peace of mind, a clear conscience towards God and man. The peace that surpasses all understanding comes from God (Philippians 4:7). We have received Jesus' peace not the peace of the world (John 14:27).

**Patience/long-suffering**: The ability to endure suffering for Christ's sake. This is produced by the Holy Spirit and by going through tribulation (Romans 5:3,4). Through trials and tribulations that are orchestrated by God in our lives this grace is produced. The ability to endure during uncertainty and trials and difficulties and sickness without complaining.

**Kindness**: The ability to diffuse a conflict situation. This disposition of character can only be wrought by the Holy Spirit. Not being rude and obnoxious even when you are undergoing a stressful situation or are frustrated because of a series of events. To exhibit kindness always is a grace wrought in a person who has been transformed by the Holy Spirit. It is a blessing.

**Goodness**: Seeking other people's benefit in material goods or otherwise. No one is good except God. Therefore, we cannot be good or exhibit goodness unless God dwells in us. Through the Holy Spirit we can seek other people's benefit and be generous and unselfish.

**Faithfulness**: Keeping your promises and word. Wanting to do this. Being faithful in work responsibilities and in the little things God demands from us

is not possible unless we are in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is only when our behavior and minds and wills are under the control of the Holy Spirit when we can be faithful to God and faithful in our work and church and family responsibilities.

**Humility**: Seeing yourself as you really are. God must show you this. When God shows us our sins and when he works in us and convicts us of our sins, it produces humility. To see ourselves as we are and to know and realize that all that we have and are, are gifts and blessings and graces from God, must of necessity produce humility.

**Self-control**: saying no to temptation, the ability and strength and inclination to do so is a blessing produced by God. The Holy Spirit restrains us to say no to evil and sin. To deny ourselves every day and say no to sin, day in and day out, year in and year out, can only be produced by the Holy Spirit's restraining hand.

**To the reflect the character of Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is the reason why God saved us. It is the reason why we exist, to become like Christ and show Christ to the world. When we exhibit kindness and love and faithfulness and joy, we glorify Christ. May God grant us the grace to reflect Christ character to others mad to each other in the church.**

## **b) Reaching the unsaved**

**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10)**

### **Introduction**

One of the objectives of the church is reaching the lost. That is why Christ came to this earth: to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Not all people will be saved. Not all will go to heaven. Not all will be among the redeemed of the Lord. Jesus Christ came to this earth, to ransom for Himself a people from all people groups and ethnic groups, with his own blood (Revelation 5:9). By nature, we were born sinners, defiled, unclean, trapped, and bound by the devil. We are children of darkness, children of the devil and children of wrath. But Christ came to seek and save the lost! Herein the love of God has been demonstrated that while we were sinners, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:8)!

That's you and me, and every person, who has ever lived. We are the ungodly. God's death did not pay for the sins of all. If that be the case all will be saved. No! Christ came to die for the ungodly, for the sheep, for those the Father gave Him (John 6:37) and those the Father will give Him. Nobody can come to Christ unless the Father draws him or her (John 6:44).

We don't know who the elect people of God are. We don't know who will be saved. Some people sin extravagantly. Some people's sins are conspicuous. Some people's sins are hidden. Some are religious. Some are very worldly. Some are cruel, some are very decent. People come in all shapes, and sizes and colors, yet Christ specializes in saving the worst kinds! Pharisees, tax collectors, thieves and murderers, God wants to save!

God specializes and the church should specialize in catching men! Remember what Jesus said to Peter when he was catching fish! Follow Me! From now on you will be catching men! (Matthew 4). He who wins souls is wise (Proverbs 11:30). It is a wonderful occupation, that of soul-winning, that of catching

men to the kingdom of Christ. We need wisdom, we need power, we need Christ, and the Holy Spirit to do this work! It is a glorious work!

I want to look at three things in this session:

- **Why do we need to reach the unsaved?**
- **Who are the unsaved?**
- **How do we reach them?**

## **1. Why do we need to reach them?**

### **1.1 God commanded us to go and reach them.**

Here follows just a few passages from Scripture:

Psalms 67:1-4 “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah” (Psalms 67:1-4 ESV)

Proverbs 24:10,11 “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Surely we did not know this,” Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?” (Proverbs 24:11-12 NKJV)

Psalms 96: 1-4 “Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.” (Psalms 96:1-4 NKJV)

Ezekiel 3:16-21 ““Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman

for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also, you will have delivered your soul." (Ezekiel 3:16-21 NKJV)

Matthew 22:2-10 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests." (Matthew 22:2-10 NKJV)

Mark 16:13-16 "Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is

baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:14-16 NKJV)

Luke 24:46-48 “Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:46-48 NKJV)

Romans 10:13-18 ““For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:13-17 NKJV)

Jude 1:20-23 “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (Jude 1:20-23 NKJV)

## **1.2 God’s love compels us to go.**

2 Cor 5:11-16 ““Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 12We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. 13For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15and he died for all, that those who live

might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2 Corinthians 5:11-15 ESV).

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 ESV).

1 John 3:16 “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3:16 ESV).

### **1.3 There is only one way of salvation: faith in Jesus Christ**

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6 ESV).

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 ESV).

1 Timothy 2:3-4 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6 ESV).

1 John 5:11,12 “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” ( 1 John 5:11,12 ESV).

### **1.4 If we don't reach them, they will go to everlasting hell.**

John 3:16,17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16,17 ESV).

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36 ESV).

Mark 9:41-49 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:41-48 ESV).

### **1.5 God has appointed the proclamation of the gospel and hearing of faith to save them.**

Romans 10:13-18 ““For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:13-17 NKJV)

Galatians 3:14-16 “so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.<sup>15</sup> To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. <sup>16</sup>Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. (Galatians 3:14-16 ESV).

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 ESV).

## **2 Who are the unsaved?**

### **2.5 Three categories:**

It is not my intention in this message to give you all the categories of unbelievers and what they believe. There is a need for knowing the mindset of unbelievers and their thinking. There are billions of unbelievers in this world. And every individual has his own peculiar set of beliefs. Broadly speaking we have religious and irreligious people. We have people who believe in God and people who don't believe in God. Those who don't believe in God, we call secularists or atheists. They believe when you die, you go back to the ground. They believe we are nothing than a product of evolutionary processes. But with those who believe in God, we get many kinds of beliefs. Muslims, Hindu's Buddhist, Animists, Pantheists, Polytheists, Satanists, and then those in Christian sects, like Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and Roman Catholics, Rastafarians. There are off course more kind of beliefs about God and many in these categories subdivide into others, like under Islam, you get, the Sunni, and the Shiites and the Sufi's. Under the Hindu's you get Hara Krishna's Pantheists, Polytheists and Sai Baba followers.

I would rather put them in three different categories:

- **The Reached but unchurched and unsaved.**

**(Those who have heard the gospel but don't attend church or are members of a church (They have been reached)**

The reached are those who have heard the good news of Jesus Christ, but they are not part of any church nor wish to be. They have either been in a church and have been hurt or they see something wrong with the established church. Nevertheless, they don't have any desire for Christ. They have heard, but don't believe. The idols of the heart have captivated them. They may have heard the gospel once, twice or many times.

- **The reached and churched and unsaved.**

**(Those who hear the gospel and go to church regularly and are members in churches (Those who have been reached)**

These people are regular attendees of a church, or they are members of churches. But they are not saved. People in this category come to church regularly but God has not opened their eyes to the glory and beauty of Christ. They are still blinded by the world. They may be in churches where a false gospel is being preached. They may think that Jesus came to make them rich and famous and healthy. And they want Jesus for all the material benefits. The following text will apply to them if they don't repent:

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:31-23 ESV).

- **The Unreached and the unchurched and unsaved**

**(Those who have never heard the gospel (the unevangelized; Unreached)**

- Joshua project tells us the unreached live mostly in these areas of the world: 10/40 Window. The 10/40 Window is that area in the world between the 10<sup>th</sup> degree to the 40<sup>th</sup> degree above the equator, latitudinal line, stretching across North Africa to Japan. Here follows a short breakdown of the composition of unreached people in the world (Taken from Joshua Project 2023 March)

-- How far have we come?

People Groups:

17,443

Unreached Groups:

7,425

% Unreached Groups:

42.6%

Population:

7.93 billion

Population in Unreached:

3.37 billion

% Population in Unreached:

42.5%

- Joshua Project tells us that people that are unreached are mostly from Islam, Hindu and Buddhist origin.
- These are the biggest unreached people groups in the world: Bengali, Urdu, Japanese, Thai, Hausa, Fulani, groups in India, like the Rajput, Chamar, Brahman and others.
- Sobering Facts (Taken from Joshua Project, from the 50 biggest Unreached people groups)

- All these people groups have less than 2% Christ-followers.
- Individuals in these groups may have very limited, if any, access to the Gospel.
- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls.
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- Every group is larger than 10,000,000 in population.
- None have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group.
- Primary religion: 23 are Muslim, 18 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 2 Ethnic Religions, 1 non-Religious.
- 44 of these 50 unreached people groups are in the 10/40 Window, 47 are in closed / restricted countries.
- The unreached also live in South Africa. Bengali, Urdu, etc.
- There are unreached people in every ethnic group but not in the same proportion.
- The young people of every generation are also unreached.

### **3 How do we reach the unsaved?**

**3.1 Through displaying the fruit of the Spirit (by our lives)**

**3.2 Through conveying words of truth (by our words)**

**3.3 Through our constant prayers (by our prayers)**

### **3.1 Through displaying the fruit of the Spirit (by our lives)**

To say we reach the unsaved with the fruit of the Spirit implies the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Without being filled with the Spirit we cannot display the fruit of the Spirit. Now in my previous session I have labored hard to show you that one of the aims of the mission of the church is to display Christ. And we have to say that unless we display the fruit of the Spirit our words and our gospel presentations would not be blessed. We must adorn the gospel message with godly deeds and godly attitudes. What I want to do here, is just give a few suggestions how simple acts can be used to open the door for the gospel message.

#### **❖ Through befriending unbelievers**

The church must make friends with unbelievers. We cannot just preach the gospel. We must take the time to get to know people. Sit down with them. Talk about the news, the weather and show genuine interest in their lives and family. When we show genuine concern for others it opens a door for gospel proclamations.

#### **❖ Through learning another language**

Missionary societies have learned long ago, to effectively reach the lost you must learn the heart language. This is one-on-one evangelism. We have world-languages like French and English and Arabic that would help you to reach millions of people in different Languages. In Africa as far as I know English is the official language in more than 20 countries. But the fact of the matter is many people will never be reached unless Christians decide to learn another language. Speaking to people in their languages is an act of love and respect.

#### **❖ Through showing hospitality**

The Bible commands us to show hospitality to others (Romans 12). Inviting people for coffee or dinner gives you the chance to show genuine concern.

We must invest time in other people's lives. This is the mission of the church. We cannot reach the unsaved unless we spend time with them.

❖ **Through day-to-day conversations in the workplace**

The pastor will never be able to reach the people the members in the church can reach. Every member of every church work somewhere. They go to universities, colleges, shops, businesses, move around in taxi's etc. everywhere you move and where you work you have the opportunity to shine light and to promote Christ, through your godly attitudes and words. Kindness and diligence at work is a testimony to the world. There is something different about a person who are kind and diligent. Greeting people, being friendly, helping people in need are all ways to reach people.

❖ **Through living lives of integrity**

If we are honest in our workplaces, when we speak the truth, when we are faithful to our wives and care for our children, when we are men and women of our word, when we walk the extra mile with others, we display the fruit of the Spirit.

❖ **Through showing mercy and having soup kitchens**

When we help people out in need, when we give food to the hungry, when we do what we can, when we see how we can meet physical needs etc. like having a soup kitchen one day a week, or helping someone get a job, or something similar we display the fruit of the Spirit which is goodness.

❖ **Through giving gifts**

Giving small gifts to people, books, tracts, clothes, shoes, or anything else are acts of love. God is a giving God. He gives to all, good and bad, good things every day. By giving our time and possessions to others we display Christ.

❖ **By giving practical help, e.g., fixing things.**

I heard of a missionary in Papa New Guinea (Otto Köning) who after years of trying to convert the heathen, decided another approach. People were coming to him and asking if he could fix things. He decided he would help in fixing hammers and boats and other things. Soon the whole village was coming to him and asking him to fix all kinds of broken things. The fact that he expended himself in this way, people wanted to hear his message. This resulted in him sharing the gospel and many people coming to faith in Christ. So, when people in your congregation have gifts of fixing all kinds of things, let them use it for God's glory!

### ❖ Through Support roles

In fact, any gift that you may have in social media, Internet, finances, education, logistics, medical skills, first aid, computer, can be used by God, to reach people. Missionaries across the world and church members around the world work in different jobs and they can all be used to reach people with the gospel.

### 3.2. Through conveying words of truth in love (by our words)

When we reach people with our words, we are reaching them with the words of truth, with the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Our ideas don't matter that much to change people. It is God's word that will change people. It is the gospel that will transform people. Why do we reach people? We are concerned about their salvation, isn't it? The church's mission is to reach the unsaved, so that the elect of God may be saved. Not all will be saved, not all will believe. But they won't be saved unless they hear and believe the gospel.

Someone has once said: "always preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words." I understand the sentiment in this phrase. But it is unbiblical. Nobody will be saved unless they hear the gospel! We have to preach the gospel. And we have to use different means to preach the gospel.

Below follow a few ways:

❖ **Through preaching the gospel in churches**

It goes without saying that we reach the lost in our churches. We invite people, neighbors etc. to come to our churches. Unserved people are in countless churches every week and we pray that God would bring them to church, don't we? We plead that God would give them new hearts, and we plead with God that they would understand the gospel as we preach and be converted! We preach and we urge and we plead with sinners in our own congregations and in other churches wherever we can find a place to preach that sinners come to Christ. We must go to the next towns and to other churches (See Mark 1:38).

❖ **Through teaching the gospel in Bible studies, in churches and the workplace**

We invite people to come to Bible studies and as we do Bible studies, we preach the gospel from the books of the Old and New Testament. We preach the law and the gospel. We call people to repent, and we urge them to believe in Jesus. We do Bible studies at churches, and we do Bible studies in the workplace. We cannot only remain in churches. We can invite unbelievers to come and discover the main messages of the Bible. We must take the Bible to the workplace. Invite friends.

❖ **Through preaching the gospel open air**

One of my favorite ways to preach the gospel is open-air. It's a completely different atmosphere. You find a public place, where there are many people, like at a train station, or in front of a shopping mall, or on a street corner. My suggestion is that you have a Book table with tracts and literature. Even a poster. New Testaments to hand out. Have tracts in different languages. What language are the people speaking in the area? It is good to have more than one in the team. One or two can hand out tracts and the other can preach. It

is not necessary but advisable to have a microphone and a speaker. If you have a very loud voice you don't need a speaker. Then start preaching. Take a passage and let it fly. In open-air preaching you must quote Bible texts, vital texts that summarize the gospel, like Romans 5:8, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, Matthew 1:23, John 1:12-14. You must have texts that diagnoses their spiritual condition, like Romans 3:11-19, Romans 3:23, 6:23. You must warn of coming judgment often, because of our guilt. Use texts like Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:15, Matthew 25:46 and others. And then you must urge for repentance and faith in Christ. You must preach on the glories and excellencies of Christ. Talk about God's attributes. But in open air preaching many people will only hear three or two sentences. Make sure every sentence is loaded with Biblical truth and that you labor to make the gospel clear. God's nature, our sinfulness and danger, judgment to come and God's provision of salvation in Christ must be made clear. And then the urgency to repent of sins and believe in Christ.

#### ❖ Through evangelism on the streets

Evangelism on the streets is a bit different than evangelism open air. Because on the streets you focus on one-on-one conversations where you have interactions with people. There are good courses that can help with this, like "Way of the Master" by Ray Comfort. They help you to start conversations on the streets. To really reach people on the streets you need to know how to start a conversation and when and how to switch over to a gospel presentation. Some good starters could include talking about the weather and what is going on in the sports world. And then at a convenient time switch it to a spiritual conversation. Ask questions like: What happens when a person dies? If you die tonight, are you sure you are going to heaven? What do you believe will happen when you die?

#### ❖ Through evangelism door to door

I used to do much more door-to door evangelism. Going from flat to flat, house to house and sharing the law and gospel is a way to reach the lost. By knocking on doors, going to the next houses two by two we are doing what

Jesus commanded us. Showing interest in others, praying for them, and sharing the gospel are ways to reach the unsaved. I have experienced firsthand how God has saved people by doing this ministry. We cannot just stay in our churches and preach on Sunday's. We must reach out to more. Sit around the table with people and share the message. Answer objections. Clarify misunderstandings. Get your hands dirty.

### ❖ Through gospel-conversations on social media and the Internet

These days there are so many ways to reach the lost on social media, through videos, articles, blogs, sermons in many languages, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and others to get the message out. Many of these platforms have instant messages or work through email, like Global Media Outreach. Many gospel seeds can be sown through the Internet, there are also dangers involved in spending too much time on the Internet, but many people could be reached now from the comfort of your home through the Internet. You can reach thousands of people through video and audio messages through the Internet with minimal costs.

### ❖ Through gospel-counsel and prayer

A good way to reach people is by simply asking them: How may I pray for you? I have used this methodology and have experiencing it to be effective. I have witnessed answers to prayer through this way. Many times, when you ask someone this question they will open about their problems. And then there will be an opportunity to counsel and share the gospel. To give effective godly counsel to people, we must listen to people's problems first. Problems and struggles cannot just be cast out and rebuked. Through counseling, which is love in action, we reach the lost.

### ❖ Through gospel-literature and book distribution

I have attempted to always have gospel tracts, Bibles and literature with me. We cannot bottle-neck the gospel. It would be a crime to keep it for ourselves. When you drive, when you go shopping, always have gospel-literature on

hand to give away. Sow the gospel seeds on all grounds. Have a few good books you can hand out on outreaches and when you travel.

#### ❖ Through Conferences and Seminars

I have had the privilege to be involved in African Pastors' Conferences where we have distributed thousands of books and pamphlets and digital resources. Many people that come to our Conferences are not saved. Pastors are Bible teachers are supposed to be saved, but unfortunately many are not. They don't understand the gospel. At Conferences we are able to reach those who need to be reached through different topics on the Bible, gospel, church and salvation.

#### ❖ Through visiting those in hospitals and prisons

These are great places to share the gospel. People have time to think and read and pray in hospitals and prisons. When we read Matthew 25:31-46 we see that visiting those in prisons and hospitals should be on the priority list in serving Christ.

#### ❖ Through Camps and visiting schools

Many schools are open to the gospel and will allow Christians to preach at assemblies and at Christian societies, although in many countries schools are closed for Christian ministry. Many College Campuses also provide opportunities to reach the unsaved.

#### ❖ Through protests and Placard demonstrations

### 3.3 Through our constant prayers

God has chosen means to save the lost. The preaching of the gospel and the prayers of His people. Both are vital and both are necessary. If we don't pray the gospel will have no power to change people's hearts.

Matthew 9:35-38

Ep 6:18-20

As we saw in chapter 5 in this book, the church must be immersed in prayer. Because prayer is connecting to the power source which is God. Only God can save a soul. Only God can save His elect. And prayer is the acknowledgment of his sovereignty and power to save the lost. The gospel worker and the pastor and missionary are powerless without God. Only when we realize that God saves, and God regenerates and makes people alive spiritually will we be constant in prayer.

## c) Training leaders

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV)

### Introduction:

Our text before us helps us to understand the pattern of Scripture:

First there is the empowering:

- Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Nobody can train leaders unless he is continually strengthened by grace, the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Many corporations train leaders. Leaders are trained in every walk of life. Plumbers, computer scientists, website developers, doctors, lawyers, teachers etc. are trained. But the training of leaders in the church is different. It's not just about knowing facts and acquiring skills. Leadership training in the church is a supernatural endeavour. It is birthed in God. It is empowered by grace, the grace in Christ. Christ is the One who builds the church. Christ gives the grace. Grace is a supernatural force working through Christ. Grace comes from God. It unites us to God, it empowers for service, it equips for ministry. It works with the Holy Spirit. It fills us, it empowers us. That is the foundation. Because of Christ, His intercessions and redemption that He applies through the Holy Spirit, we can go forward, we can train others.

The second aspect is entrusting to faithful men, what you have heard:

There is a body of truths Timothy had heard from Paul. Paul was taught the gospel by God Himself. And what Paul had heard he taught Timothy in the presence of others. So, Timothy was not alone. He heard truths, the gospel from Paul. And Paul heard it from Jesus Christ. So, there are things, truths,

that we must pass on. These truths are essential. It is the basis of our spiritual warfare with Satan. Satan and the kingdom of darkness is called the father of lies. There are millions and millions of deceptions in the world. Paul taught Timothy truth, the gospel, and now, he is charging Timothy to entrust it to faithful men. Timothy must pass on what he has learned from Paul. Like Jesus, Jesus taught the disciples, and the disciples were commanded by Jesus to pass on what they have seen and heard, and now Paul does the same. It is the end of his ministry. He has run the race, he has kept the faith and now he is charging Timothy, to preach the word, (2 Timothy 4:1,2) and to entrust to others what he has heard from Paul. The word “entrust” means to make sure these people you are teaching know what you are teaching them, is true and trustworthy. “Make sure they understand the things I am teaching you is a matter of life and death.” And they must be taught to faithful men. Leaders. Men who will be able to appreciate and internalize what you are teaching them.

And then thirdly: so that they “will be able to teach others also.”

Paul was not just concerned about Timothy; Paul was concerned about finding faithful men to teach others. The truth must be passed on continually. We cannot just stop with the people who come to church every Sunday. We must find faithful men, who will teach others also. Leadership production is the mission of the church.

The nature of our existence is reproduction. Animals reproduce themselves. Birds reproduce themselves. Plants reproduce themselves. This life is a life of reproduction. People reproduce themselves. Evil wants to reproduce evil. And God, wants to reproduce people who are godly and holy and good and wise and industrious. The mission of the church, is that people will look like Christ, behave like Christ, reflect Christ, and teach and speak like Christ. We need more leaders who reproduce more Christians by the grace of God.

In this session we are going to look at the following:

### **1. The Biblical Mandate and Example**

2. What do mean by leaders?
3. What do we want leaders to do?
4. Train leaders through theological institutions and Colleges
5. Train leaders through internship programs in the local church
6. Train leaders through the life and teaching of the church
7. Train leaders through Pastors Training, Seminars and Conferences
8. Train leaders through Books and Bible- Corresponding Courses

## 1. The Biblical Mandate and Example

**Moses:** When God called His people out of Egypt, he gave them leaders. He gave them Moses and Aaron. God prepared Moses in Egypt and in the desert for 40 years to serve Him. The Bible tells us there was not a man on earth as meek as Moses. Moses was the man for the job. And he had a big job. The job was too big for Moses. Through the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, he appointed 70 leaders, to counsel and shepherd his people. There was approximately 2 000 000 people Moses had to look after. The job was too big for him and Aaron. Listen to Exodus 18:

“Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.

Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they

have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace." So, Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country." (Exodus 18:1, 8-9, 13-27 ESV).

**Jesus:** What did Jesus do during his 3-year ministry. He selected 12 apostles. He told them to follow Him and that He will make them fishers of men. He taught them. He trained them. He lived with them. He ate with them. He rebuked them. He laid down His life for them. He kept them by the word of God. He gave his life as a ransom to save them. He invested his life for three years into these twelve men. He trained them. He showed them how to live, how to talk. He was the perfect example of holiness and godliness. And then after he made disciples, He went to heaven and told them:

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

After Jesus made disciples, after He completed his work, He sent them to make more disciples. And as Luke 24 and Acts 1 said, they had to wait for the Holy Spirit, for further equipping. The Holy Spirit is essential in training leaders. The Holy Spirit empowers us not only for witness but for ministry and equipping the saints. Jesus could train the disciples because he was baptized with the Holy Spirit and empowered with the Holy Spirit. The training of leaders is a Trinitarian endeavour. God sent the Son, kept Christ, Christ trained the men, accomplished redemption, sent His church, and then from heaven He Intercedes for us, and the Holy Spirit empowers and equips us to minister.

**Paul:** This was also Paul's strategy. Paul was the apostle who was used of God to plant many churches. But he did not stay at all these churches. His role was to preach the gospel, establish churches, nurture the church for a short time and then appoint elders, leaders to shepherd the people. So, his main task was to plant churches and train leaders to shepherd the people. We see this pattern very clearly with Paul. Timothy and Titus were his fellow workers, and he gave them the same command: to train leaders and appoint elders to lead the churches.

"When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:21-23 ESV)

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses

entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV)

## **2. What do we mean by leaders?**

### ❖ Elders and Bible teachers

We read: “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:5-9 ESV)

In this passage we see cardinal things: Leaders must have godly character. Secondly, they must know the word, thirdly hold firm to the trustworthy word, believe in what it says. They must know theology and believe in what they teach, and fourthly, they must be able to teach the word of God.

- ❖ People of godly character
- ❖ People that know the Word of God
- ❖ People that believe the Word of God
- ❖ People who can teach the Word of God

Now it is true that not all leaders are elders in churches. Sunday School teachers are leaders. Teachers at schools are leaders. If you lead a Bible study at church, you are in a sense a leader. If you are a missionary and evangelizes you are leading others to follow Jesus. So, the word, leader, has a broader sense than just elders and leaders in a church setting. You may be a theological instructor, or a missionary leader. These qualifications what we find in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 especially the character qualifications should apply to all Christians, but especially to those who teach the Bible.

### 3. What do we want leaders to do?

Apart from what we said before about leaders, leaders must be committed to the mission of the church as we see in this Conference.

They must have a singular passion: a Passion for the glory of God, a passion to know Christ and make Him known. A passion for the fame of Christ not of self. A passion, a singular passion for the glory of Christ in their own family, in their own church, community and among the nations. Their first passion is not a secular occupation or money. Their passion is to use money and means and their jobs to promote Christ. Christ is the blazing centre of their ministries. Christ is preeminent in their lives. They have a passion for God. It is an all-consuming passion. A passion that dominates all other passions:

They MUST: have a singular passion to

- ❖ Glorify, know and obey the Triune God, not self or people.
- ❖ Model and follow Christ (reflect Christ), not the world.
- ❖ Know the Bible accurately,
- ❖ Teach the Bible accurately, not entertain people.
- ❖ Be people immersed in prayer, not in the Television or the world.
- ❖ Know the people they reach out to but be kingdom-minded.
- ❖ Reach the unsaved intelligently, in multiple ways, a passion to make God known.
- ❖ Make disciples not just converts, nurturing the church.
- ❖ Train other leaders, that will train others.
- ❖ Be involved in church-planting and shepherding churches.
- ❖ Preparing people for the coming of Christ

**And**

- ❖ Be involved in various ministries.
  - serving
  - support

**In the next few points, we are going to look at the how:**

**How do we produce leaders? Where? What must we do?**

I think first of all we have to say, that wherever training takes place it must focus on three things: **the heart, the head and the hands**. In other words: character, knowledge and truth, and skills, and I believe in that order. Before we train people, we must make sure they are born again, authentic Christians. Character comes before knowledge. There are too many colleges who focus too much on the head. And many times, where this happens the knowledge that is acquired is too academic. The emphasis is on academia and not on character. Both are essential in theological training, but character comes first.

I believe the best way to train leaders is by a combination of people and churches and institution that share the same vision. Therefore, I have included five ways. These bodies, or people, must interact with one another and help one another, “synergize” is the word, work together, to train leaders that will have this singular passion. In fact, it is the body of Christ, that trains leaders together, with a focus on

- ❖ Train leaders through theological institutions and Colleges
- ❖ Train leaders through internship programs in the local church
- ❖ Train leaders through the life and teaching of the church
- ❖ Through Pastors Training Workshops, Seminars and Conferences
- ❖ Through Books and Bible- Corresponding Courses

I believe through these, we can say, “bodies” or programs and institutions we will get good results. The focus in training should be personal involvement in the students’ lives. Mentoring must take place. Theological coaching with an emphasis on

- character, (heart)
- knowledge, (head) and
- skills, (hands)

#### **4. Train leaders through theological institutions and Colleges**

Most theological training focuses on acquiring knowledge, which is of the essence. Students that are trained must know the Bible. They must know the New and Old Testament, they must, if possible, know Hebrew and Greek. They must know what the Bible teaches. They must know Systematic Theology. They must know about Missions and Counselling and Evangelism and a myriad of practical things. Knowledge is of the essence. But we must send people to the right theological institutions and colleges. Not all colleges are good. Some teach liberal theology. Some teach errors of serious kinds. We must send people to colleges where the focus is on maturing people in the faith. The college must focus on prayer. A life of prayer must be cultivated at the same time new understanding is received of God and the Bible.

What I'm saying here is not straightforward. Because many institutions focus on acquiring knowledge. I have heard of students that lose their faith at theological institutions. This is not a joke. The lecturers at theological institutions must be passionate about the truths of Scripture they teach. And they must convey this passion and pass on this passion for the glory of God unto others. Theological Colleges are not just there to help you pass the BA or the Honours or whatever it might be. They are primarily there to help you be zealous for truth for Christ, his salvation and for the glory of God in all things.

If the theology you are learning draws you away from your devotion to Christ, be aware! Watch out! Theology and theological training should enflame your passion for Christ and to reach the lost with the gospel. I'm not saying your theological instructors should not help you be diligent in reading and studying and doing your assignments and so on. I'm saying you shouldn't backslide spiritually because of the knowledge you acquire. The knowledge you receive, the truth you receive, should help you, not harm you! A good college emphasizes heart and head. Knowing Greek and Hebrew will be a tremendous benefit for anyone who are called to preach the gospel and pastoral ministry. Pastors' main task is to feed the people of God with the Word of God, week in and week out.

## 5. Train leaders through internship programs in the local church

We have friends in ministry where this is happening very effectively. One of the best ways to train leaders is in the local church. Leaders must be hands on. They must see how theology works practically. How do you apply the truths you have heard? We can learn so many things in books. But we must put our theology into practice. And the local church provides the opportunity for this to happen. Also, in the local church mentoring takes place. Local churches are places where people pray and aim to be devoted to Christ. It is best that leaders who are trained in colleges be involved in local churches where they have opportunities to serve, preach, pray, evangelize, lead Bible studies and counsel, etc. The local church helps people to see what ministry is all about. Not all people are called to teach. Not all people are called to be pastors and elders. While you are involved in a local church you will realize where God wants to use you. He will show you where you lack skills, knowledge and godly character traits.

It is in the local church where our giftings are recognized or not, where we receive commendation or not, where you find your place in the body of Christ. It is rather the local church, if it is a healthy one, that breeds leaders for the glory of God. I'm not saying theological institutions are redundant, but they cannot function alone apart from local churches. We need godly, mature men who pray for, guide, lead, encourage and affirm people for the work of ministry.

It is in the local church where our devotion for Christ must grow. Without godly character we won't be fit for ministry. Without growing in Christlikeness, without conforming to the image of Christ, the leaders we are breeding and growing will fail dismally and awfully. **May God help us to get the balance right, between, heart, head and hands. Leaders need all three! Skills can always be sharpened the longer you live, but if there are serious character defects the church will suffer tremendously.**

## **6. Train leaders through the life and teaching of the church**

What am I thinking of here? This point relates to the previous point, but it must be applied in a broader sense. We train pastors, but pastors are not the only leaders in the congregation. As I said before, we have Sunday School leaders, we have people who are Principals in public schools, we have teachers, we have missionaries in our churches, we have many different leaders in the church, who needs equipping. And the local church, the elders, are supposed to equip the saints for ministry, service, wherever God has placed them. The Pastors and elders do this through teaching, counselling, house visitations, Bible studies, sermons, prayer sessions, and different programs in the church.

- ❖ **Bible studies**
- ❖ **Sermons**
- ❖ **Fellowship meetings**
- ❖ **Prayer**
- ❖ **Programs**
- ❖ **Informal programs**

Think of how Jesus trained his men and how Paul trained his workers. They lived together. They ate together. They travelled together. It is during these times of living and working together that we grow most, and that people learn most of us. Jesus' disciples saw how he reacted to provocations and temptations, to danger and accusations. His disciples saw how he loved to pray to His Father early in the morning. There is no short cut to train leaders. It takes effort. It takes time. It takes sweat and tears. We must move out of our comfort zones to help people understand how to follow Christ. At all times, as we said before, we need the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us. **In order to train leaders this way, we need to spend time with people. We need to pray with people. We need to listen to them and teach them.**

## **7. Through Pastors Training, Seminars and Conferences**

Organizations, and ministries who do conferences, seminars, training in counselling, evangelism, church planting, preaching, pastoring and so on are all useful, sometimes, vital, and necessary to help ministers to acquire commentaries, resources, books, material, so that they may become better equipped for the work that they have been called to do. These conferences, which I am part off, are not meant to replace the work of Bible Colleges and local churches that do internship programs, they are meant to supplement and to revive the church and pastors and leaders to do their work more effectively.

Without blowing our own horn, I have heard how many people have been helped by ministries as African Pastors' Conferences, Frontline Fellowship, DesiringGod, Ligonier, to name a few, who are there not to replace the work of colleges but through the resources they provide, assist, help and sometimes recover and revitalize a dying church or ministry. These ministries many times exist because leaders cannot afford to spend much time and money to go to an official theological institution.

## **8. Through Books and Bible- Corresponding Courses and the Internet**

I can say from experience that internet courses, books I have bought and read and sermons and lectures I have gone through on the internet and otherwise have been the greatest help in my spiritual formation. We at African Pastors' Conferences cannot emphasize enough the incalculable value of books and audio resources, sermons you can acquire through different means. There is such a wealth of good, godly and experienced Christian workers and pastors we can learn from. Men like Charles Spurgeon, Martin Luther, RC Sproul, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, AW Pink, Sinclair Fergusson and many others throughout the centuries have left us their books, we can read. *May we not neglect these resources when we have the opportunity!*

## **d) Planting diverse biblical churches**

### **Biblical Church planting**

#### **Matthew 16:13-20**

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.” (Matthew 16:13-20 ESV)

#### **Introduction**

Our theme for the Conference is: The Mission of the Church. In the last session we have seen that God wants leaders to be equipped so that the church may grow and be strong. The church is the called-out ones. The word “church” in Greek is “ecclesia”, which means “assembly” and the other root word is, “kaleo” which means “to call out of.” The church is those who have been called out of the world, to belong to God. They have been set apart by the Holy Spirit. We are those who have been gathered together, to have fellowship with one another and to worship the King of kings. Now during this conference, we have looked at different things. We need to glorify God. We need to be like Christ and reflect Christ. We need to know the Bible and be people of prayer. We need to know the people we are reaching, and we need to reach the lost. We need to make disciples and we need to train leaders. But all these things are not enough. As our text said, Christ is building His church. We need to be concerned about building Christ’s church. Building the

church and growing churches, and planting churches should be a primary concern of the church. We cannot just reach lost people and win souls for Christ, disciple them, and leave them to gather where they desire. The souls that are won for CHRIST, the people that God will call, must become members of local churches, and where no Biblical church exists, Biblical churches must be established or planted.

There are many dysfunctional churches out there as well. Sometimes churches must be replanted.

If we look at the apostle Paul, we see that wherever he went, when he won people for Christ, and reached them, he disciplined them, planted churches and appointed leaders. This is the pattern in the Bible.

God is the One, Christ is the One, who is building His church, He has been doing that since Adam's day. Christ is the chief agent in planting churches, building churches, growing churches, and expanding the church. We the members and leaders of churches are the secondary agents, through whom God works. God uses means, to plant and grow churches, and those means, are people, Christians, and leaders in churches.

God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save us from our sins and the wrath of God. The Father and the Son sent and is sending the Holy Spirit to empower and baptize His people and now God is sending us into the world to seek and save the lost, disciple them, plant churches and grow churches so that new believers can become mature in the faith. This is the mission of the church, so that God be glorified, and we become like Christ and reflect Christ. In this session I want to look at 2 things:

- 1. The Foundations of church planting**
- 2. The Practices of church planting**

- 1. The Foundations of church planting**

### 1.1 God and His Word

## 1.2 God's Workers and People Groups

### **2. The practices of church planting**

#### 2.1 Contact sessions: evangelism and teaching

#### 2.2 Build Relationships, Consolidation and teaching

#### 2.3 Reach the community and the world.

### **1. The Foundations of church planting**

#### 1.1 God and His Word

##### **❖ God's Sovereignty and Purposes for the world**

God and His Word are the foundations of church planting. We are not the ones who decided we want churches. In fact, we are very reluctant to plant new churches. Sometimes God chooses to bring persecution so that we may be scattered and plant churches. This is what happened in Acts 8:1. God decides where and when and who should be involved in church planting. God is sovereign in His church. He is the Head of the church. He is the leader and we the church, his body live in submission to Him. Christ is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. God's purposes for the nations and ethnic groups of the world is that He may gather the sheep in all the ethnic groups of the world into His fold, and we can say into local churches.

When people become Christians, they need to grow, mature, and be counseled. They need teaching. Care. Equipping.

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have

commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:16-20 ESV)

When we baptize people, they are officially recognized as members of Christ's body and of his church. We make disciples and baptize them so they can be active members in churches.

In Acts 13:1-4 we read:

"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus." (Acts 13:1-4 ESV)

We see in this passage that it was as the leaders were worshipping and fasting that the Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul for the work which He had called them to do. As we read the book of Acts, we see the work they went to do was preaching the gospel, reaching the lost, making disciples, appointing elders and planting churches. What is important to see in the book of Acts is that it was the Holy Spirit who took the initiative. It was the Holy Spirit who sent them off, through the church. God is sovereign and God is the initiator in missions and church planting. God is the One who has a purpose and that purpose from the beginning is to bless all the nations through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), who is Christ. His purpose is to make disciples of all ethnic groups and his purposes will be accomplished because all power in heaven and on earth has been given unto Him (Matthew 28:18-20).

### ❖ Cultivating (Receiving) Christ's Mind for a lost and needy world

You may say, do we not have enough churches?  
Has the task not been fulfilled?

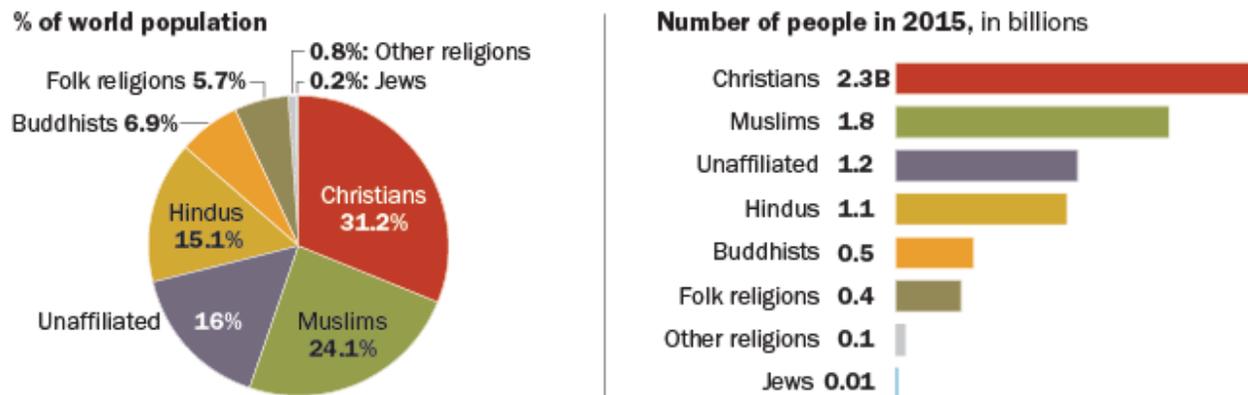
Why do we need more churches if we have churches around every hook and corner in South Africa?

Here follows some info to make you think:

World population: 7.7 billion people: that is 7 700 000 000 people.

World religions:

### Christians are the largest religious group in 2015



Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details.  
"The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Christians: 2,3 Billion. Of which 1 million are Roman Catholic.

Nominal Christians: Of the 1,3 Billion that are left a large majority would be nominal Christians. So that leaves us with around a potential 500 million authentic Christians. I think I am liberal in my thinking. There is probably less than 10 percentage of Christians of the world population of 7,9 billion.

(Joshua Project: March 2023)

People Groups:

17,443

Unreached Groups:

7,425

% Unreached Groups:  
42.6%

Population:

7.93 billion

Population in Unreached:

3.37 billion

% Population in Unreached:

42.5%

The young: The 4/14 Window: Researchers say 25% of the world population is below 15 years old. That's almost 2 billion people.

South Africa: 70% says they are Christian. I would hope that at least 10% are real Christians.

What does the Bible say about the world: a few texts:

Matthew 9:35-38 "The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest...to send laborers."

Mark 16:15 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Matthew 22 "Go and invite as many as you can find and compel them to come in."

Psalms 67 "Let the peoples praise You, let all the peoples praise You."

Revelation 5:9 "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll, and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Jonah

I don't want to linger too long on this point because we looked at the need to reach the unsaved already in session 5. What I do want to emphasize is the fact that we need a global vision for the world. We cannot only see the need among our own people. There are people who have never heard the gospel. There are schools to be visited, people to be reached and the gospel to be proclaimed. We must not be too narrow minded. The world is big and even though you as a church can do only so much, you must realize that you can partner with organizations or church bodies that have a global vision. God has a global vision for the world, and so should we have a global vision as churches. We must cultivate Christ's mind for the lost. We need to pray for the world and for the unreached.

## **1.2 God's Workers and People Groups**

### ❖ God's Qualified workers (God prepares His workers)

In the previous session we saw that one of the missions of the church is to train leaders. God does this. It is the task of the church, to train workers in different ways so that they can be sent out to do the work of ministry. God is the primary Agent once again. Think of the prophets in the Bible. Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the apostles, Paul. They were all called by God. God called them in different ways, but once God called them, they knew they were called. God calls and prepares workers for the work of church planting. After God called Paul, he had to wait before he was sent out from the church in Antioch. The same applied to the apostles. The apostles were trained after they were called by Jesus for the work of ministry. Church planters must be mature believers. They must know God, be assured of their salvation, know the Bible well, and who have godly character. They must qualify according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They must have the qualifications of elders. Nobody should endeavor the work of church planting if he doesn't qualify to be an elder. It would not end well. Church-planters will be attacked, vilified, persecuted more than others, (tall trees are more affected by wind) and only those who are mature Christians will be able to stand under such adversity.

### ❖ Local Churches, associations and sending of workers.

We see in the Bible that it was the local church in Acts that sent out Paul and Barnabas to plant churches. The local church must send out workers.

This is the model we see in the book of Acts, and this is what we see Jesus did to the apostles. Jesus commissioned and sent out the apostles to preach and make disciples and plant churches. We see this again in the book of Acts. Now we know that historically the church has been ill equipped to reach the lost and establish churches. That's why since 1793 when William Carey went to labor in India, many societies were formed. Even till today many mission organizations and societies exist to help missionaries and church planters to acclimatize and help people to get to the places where God wants them to work. Church-planting is not straight forward. It requires much wisdom, much prayer, much logistical support, much money, much experience, in many fields. The whole church must take the whole gospel to the whole world. This is what is required of the church and to accomplish this, we need partnerships. Some churches are part of denominations. Others are part of an association. Others are independent. No matter where God has planted and placed you, you need partnerships. You need counsel. You need input from other brothers and sisters. You need to be equipped for church planting.

But the primary task of sending workers is God. God must call you. You must be certain of this call and this call must be affirmed by the leaders of your local church and sometimes by leaders of other churches as well. And the local church must send you out. This is the Biblical Model.

### ❖ Work in a Team

We see in the book of Acts that Paul and Barnabas and Paul and Silas were sent out together. When we read through the New Testament, we see Jesus sent them out two by two. Paul had many fellow laborers, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquilla, Titus, Epaphras and many others (See Romans 16). This is very important in church planting. We are not lone rangers in this endeavor. Moses

had his Aaron. Elisha had the sons of the prophets who worked with him. Jesus had his followers. Paul had his fellow laborers.

As we said earlier, you must identify the people who should work with you, in your church and in your association of churches. People that are likeminded in doctrine. People that have a passion for God and righteousness. Whoever rejects this principle of partnerships will not be effective in church planting. There are a few exceptions though. Saint Patrick e.g.

❖ Know the cultures, religious makeup, language and people group/s

When it comes to planting a church, the church that you are in must decide among which group or groups they want to plant.

Is the church going to be among your own culture and language group?

Is it among a different culture group?

Is it among a different language?

Is it among a different religion?

Do you want to plant a monolingual church?

Has God called you to plant in a rural setting or in a city?

If in a city, will it be a multi-ethnic church or not?

If a multi-ethnic church, which will be the primary language you use?

Will you use more than one language?

Where has God called you to plant a church? In the same city? Province? country or in another country?

Will the church be planted among an unreached people group?

The answer to these questions must be answered before you plant a church. This is not to say God cannot redirect you. But if you don't have a clear vision and mission in church planting you are bound to fail. They who fail to plan, plan to fail. Success loves preparation and planning. Answers to these questions may take months or years as you pray with your church and leaders.

**God has either called you to plant a church among a specific people group, like the Sotho's, Zulu's, Thai, or Bengali's or**

**God has called you to plant a multi-ethnic church.**

**And these two are completely different ballgames.**

If God has called you to plant a church internationally a lot more preparation and research is needed.

If God has called you to plant a church among an unreached people group in another country you need more time to learn the language. If God has called you to plant among an unreached in South Africa also a different methodology is needed.

**For any church plant it is essential to overcome three barriers:**

**Communication:**

**Culture:**

**Religious beliefs and customs:**

**You need to know as we said in the 4<sup>th</sup> session, the language, culture and beliefs of the people you are reaching. This takes time and effort.**

**A study of two missionaries, Hudson Taylor in China and William Carey in India in the nineteenth century will show how important it is to study culture and language to be effective in church planting.**

## **2. The practices of church planting**

**2.1 Contact sessions: evangelism and teaching**

**2.2 Build Relationships, Consolidation and teaching**

**2.3 Reach the community and the world.**

Before we dig into these, we must emphasize that in church-planting you don't want to plant a church that will always be dependent on the mother-church. You want to plant:

Self-governing  
Self-supporting and  
Self-propagating churches

What do we mean by this?

This wouldn't necessarily be true in the beginning. The church-plant would be dependent on the mother church in various ways, financially, for support etc. in the beginning. But it must change over time. In the end it must be autonomous, supporting itself, and governing itself.

## **2.1 Contact sessions: evangelism and teaching**

- ❖ Identify and acquire a location/s for outreach and meetings.

Once you have determined where to plant a church you need to do evangelism. There are different types as we know. With a lot of evangelism, you need to find a venue for initial meetings. This may be at your home or renting a school hall, or another church building or a town hall. This might change over time, but it is important to find a venue where you can teach the Bible.

- ❖ Do comprehensive evangelism in the community.

This will include as we said before in session 5, many types:

Door-to-door evangelism, soup-kitchens, school assemblies, doing evangelistic Bible studies at schools and colleges, hospital evangelism, prison evangelism, open-air-preaching, debates, seminars, conferences, open-air-preaching, tract and literature distribution, social media-evangelism etc. It has been proved that without a lot of seed sowing and outreach we cannot

expect fruit. That is a spiritual law. He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly. He who sows abundantly shall reap abundantly (2 Corinthians 9).

❖ Identify areas of outreach:

Homes, flats, schools, streets,  
shopping malls, Hospitals, colleges,  
hospitals, prisons, public spaces.

❖ Finding men of peace

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he charged them that when they come to a certain place, they must find a man of peace (See Matthew 10, Luke 10). When Paul went to do his missionary journeys, we find that Priscilla and Aquilla was favorable towards them. When he taught people in different places some believed and then he continued teaching them in specific locations. When people invite you to come to their house, go. Because the men of peace are the men that you can use to start a Bible study and they can invite relatives and friends. Many times, churches start with Bible studies or talks about history or something similar. Once you have found “men of peace” you get a door into a community which will lead to more gospel sowing. I found this principle at work in doing Bible studies at schools. Also, in doing conferences, which are strictly speaking not planting churches, but we work through “men of peace” local organizers who arrange for us places to teach. This same principle applies in church planting.

## **2.2 Build Relationships, Consolidation and teaching**

❖ Invitations and follow-up work.

Once you have acquired a venue there are various ways to invite people to meetings, through flyers, word-of mouth, and billboards and advertisements on social media. People who have shown interest while evangelizing can be invited for meetings and be visited again. It is good to do regular follow-up work.

❖ Have regular worship services and Bible studies.

The man or men of peace will be your core-group and with his or them you can begin meetings. From a Bible study you can move to worship services on Sunday's and classes on Biblical doctrine. These meetings must be on a weekly basis. It is good to work systematically through books of the Bible. God builds his church through his word. Therefore, the church is fed and built up and created by the preaching of the word as the Holy Spirit makes alive and saves those who are lost.

❖ The place of Biblical counseling and fellowship.

When you reach out to people in various location you will find people who asks for prayer and share difficult problems with you. You will have to be able to counsel those who with various problems. Some cases are very hard, and sometimes you will need experts to help. Like doctors or professional psychiatrists. The word, however, should be the chief agent to transform people and bring them into the fold of Christ.

❖ Focus on making disciples and disciple-making disciples.

As you have your meetings you must focus on making disciples and making disciples that will be making disciples. We don't know who are saved and who are not in our meetings. So, the gospel must be made clear throughout your meetings again and again. People should be called to repentance again and again as you teach the Bible. The culture must be established of passing on what you have learned. We cannot just preach the gospel again and again. We must get people to share the gospel. Disciples are made by sharing the gospel and passing on what you have learned in the Bible. Obeying and applying the word of God, is a principle people must obey.

❖ Have prayer partners and prayer meetings.

In the work of church-planting you need prayer-partners. People from other churches praying for you and you praying with individuals in the work. There

must be a core group. As I said before, church-planting is a team effort. In the team there must be a lot of prayer. Have at least one prayer meeting every week and with other people as well.

To have more than one prayer partner is good and helpful.

❖ Decide on a Confession/Statement of faith.

Before you can constitute a church, you need members, a statement of faith and a constitution. Also, the marks of a true church are the Biblical preaching of the word of God, correct administration of sacraments and church-discipline. You cannot practice discipline without membership, and you cannot have membership unless they have agreed to a covenant and signed a body of beliefs or statement of faith. The church that is being planted believes certain things about the Bible. Not all churches believe the same things. Some believe in infant baptism others not. Some believe we should speak in tongues, others not. Some are Reformed in their soteriology, and others are Arminian/Semi-Pelagian. The church must decide what it believes about the Bible and teach that. A good confession of faith is the 1689 Baptist Confession of faith or the Westminster Confession if you believe in infant Baptism. All the members don't have to agree on all that is in the document but must agree with a shortened statement of faith.

❖ Adopt a constitution

A constitution is a legal document that ensure a church conforms to the law concerning tax laws and property laws and things like Non-Profit status etc. In some countries churches are illegal so the church must go underground, and many times suffer under persecution. It is not essential for a church to have legal status, but it is advisable. A constitution helps a church to set rules and regulations for activities and meetings and duties of elders and deacons.

❖ Constitute membership

The team, elders or leaders that are planting the church must interview people that are coming and accept into membership (with the existing members), those who publicly confess Christ and those who have been saved by the power and grace of God. Those who show visible fruit in their lives of a work of grace should be encouraged to become members of the church.

❖ Administration of sacraments

Once there are members in a church, baptism and the Lord Supper can be administered. It is important that these be administered frequently because the sacraments are both signs and seals of God's grace of redemption of those who are saved by Christ.

❖ Formulate a vision and mission for the church

To formulate a vision or mission for a church is not essential, but doing this helps the church to be reminded of why they are there in the community. A vision and mission should be Biblical and Christ-exalting. It should be easy to remember. It should be an encouragement to live for Christ. A vision could be: To know Christ and make Him known. And a Mission how you are going to a achieve your mission: By receiving the word of grace and passing on the word in evangelism, discipleship and training leaders.

### **2.3 Reach the community and the world**

❖ Impact the poor and needy/distressed in the community

The church of Jesus Christ is called to be salt and light in this world. We have a responsibility to the poor and hungry and destitute. We have a responsibility to help those who have need. We need to help the drug-addicts, the depressed, the mentally ill, those who suffer from unemployment. We have a responsibility to shine in darkness. Let people see your good works. Have a soup kitchen, etc.

❖ Work for justice and holiness, networking

Even though we are planting a new church, we need to network with other churches and fight injustices, like abortion on demand. If we remain silent about those who are dragged to the slaughter, we are guilty. We will be complicit to their deaths. We need to give money for organizations that fight against crime and corruption in South Africa and in the world. We are the light of the world. Let the people see your stand for righteousness.

❖ Secular work and outreach, networking

In our workplaces where God has placed us, we need to reach out to the lost and make a stand for Jesus and righteousness.

❖ Train workers and leaders, networking

We have covered this one in our previous talk about training leaders.

❖ Use of technology, social media and paraphernalia

Make use of innovative means to attract seekers like social media and the Internet. Facebook Pages, making videos putting them on social media and YouTube. All these can be used to invite people to meetings and making people aware of what is going on in the church. Having a church website and updating it regularly is a good way to reach people.

## Appendix

### What about church discipline?

**Heb 12:3** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

**Heb 12:4** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

**Heb 12:5** And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

**Heb 12:6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.”

**Heb 12:7** It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

**Heb 12:8** If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

**Heb 12:9** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

**Heb 12:10** For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

**Heb 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

## Introduction

Since the times of the Reformation, the three cardinal signs of a true church of God have been postulated as the faithful preaching of God’s word, the correct and faithful administration of the sacraments or ordinances of God instituted by Christ which includes the Lord’s supper and baptism and the faithful administration of church discipline. As we briefly emphasized the primacy of preaching the Word in our second and third sessions in the “Task of the Church” and “Why the gospel is important to the church”, and also in

session 5, “What should happen during worship services” we now look at the practice of church discipline. It is a subject that we don’t want to talk about because of the abuse of this practice, maybe in our own life or in church history. In Africa, it is also unpopular to speak of church discipline because of our communal identity (Ubuntu). When people do wrong, we are slow to correct them, especially when they are influential and wealthy. We perceive this tendency in politics. It is as if those who are in power are above the law. When rulers get in control and are involved in corruption and theft, it seems there are no consequences, and they can do what they want and get away with it because they are “in power”.

We bring this mindset also into the church, and we fail to realize that nobody, not even the pastor or elders or their wives, are above God’s law. God is the head of the Church. Christ is the head of the church, not the pastor nor the deacons or elders, and he rules the church through the infallible and inerrant word of God. Nobody is above God’s law. His moral law is unchangeable, as He is unchangeable.

For our churches to be Biblical, healthy churches, we need to be committed to church discipline. We are not saying that the practice of church discipline in the corrective sense should be applied to all. Not all sin should result in a church member being disciplined, but unrepentant sin. We all sin every day, and every member of the church sins, but not all undergo corrective church discipline. The only sin that must receive corrective church discipline, or the only people that must be excommunicated or experience personal admonition, are those who refuse to repent of their sins. I will make this point clear later as well. Church discipline is a complicated issue. And I will not “cover all the bases” in this session but point out the most important things. There is not a “one size fits all approach” when it comes to practicing church discipline. Each case is unique and has its own context.

So, in this study, we will look at the following.

1. **God disciplines those whom He loves**
2. **The purposes of discipline**

3. Membership and discipline
4. Formative or preventative discipline
5. Corrective or restorative discipline

1. God disciplines those whom He loves

It is a characteristic of unbelievers that God does not discipline them. Our text in Hebrews 12 clarifies that those who God does not discipline should be regarded as illegitimate children of God. In Romans 1:18-28 the Scriptures makes it clear that God gives unbelievers over to sexual perversion and unbridled depravity because of their sins. The fact that God leaves a person in their sins is a sign of judgment and condemnation. Therefore. It says, in verse 6:

Heb 12:6 “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.”

When discussing church discipline, we must first get our theology of discipline right. It is a sign of love that God indeed disciplines us. No natural child is without discipline. If we as parents don't discipline our children, it would be a sign of hatred towards them. But we train our children, and we love them and teach them and rebuke them and spank them when necessary because we love them, and we want to distil in them good behavior and good attitudes. We need to bend the trees while still young. And so, God does with us; he disciplines us for our good, as our text says, “so we may share in his holiness” (Hebrews 12:10).

Discipline has at its root the meaning of training. This is what discipline is all about. We should think of the life of an athlete or soldier. For athletes to compete at the highest level, they need to be disciplined in what they eat to get enough sleep and exercise. They need a rigorous routine to compete and win. And so, it is with soldiers. They need to get tough and train and exercise and learn the necessary skills to be effective in combat. And so, it is with disciples of Christ. We need discipline and training; we must train our minds to think right, live right and bring honor to Christ. We are in a battle to kill sin

and to revive righteousness. As our text says, discipline may be painful at first, but in the end, it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness. The goal of all discipline of the Lord is so that we become like Jesus Christ, that we become mature Christians (See Ephesians 4:13). For God to achieve his purpose in creating in us Christlikeness, he uses formative and corrective discipline. We think many times of discipline in negative terms, but according to Hebrews 12, it shows that we are loved by God when God disciplines us. So, when we are disciplined, our attitude should be that of thanksgiving and not complaining, even though it may initially seem painful.

## **2. The purposes of corrective church discipline**

According to Albert Martin in his book, “Corrective Church Discipline”, we find six purposes for church discipline in Scripture, and each goal complements the other. They are like segments in a pie to form a whole.

### **❖ To maintain and preserve the honor of Christ**

God uses the church to discipline us because of our sins. And sin brings dishonor to Christ. Sin is rebellion against Christ. Sin is defiance against Christ. So, church discipline is administered to maintain the honor of Christ. If public and private sins that are well known are not disciplined, it will insult Christ, who has called us to holiness and righteousness. For example, if there is a case of sexual immorality in the church, and it is known, for the church not to respond and exercise church discipline would insult the Name of Christ who called us to holiness. God makes it clear that no sexually immoral person will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-11), so to say nothing about an incident like that would greatly dishonor Christ. The same can be said if there is bitter strife between members within a congregation. Not addressing a problem like that would significantly harm the honor of Christ in a congregation.

### **❖ To restore and save (sanctify) members of the church**

The purpose of church discipline is always to restore a brother or sister and not to be vindictive and humiliate a brother or sister. When there is a need

for church discipline, the purpose is to help a brother see the error of his ways and to bring him or her back to the narrow path that leads to life. Unrepentant sin brings defilement and injury to a person's life, and we aim all in the local congregation to grow in our faith and move towards maturity. Division, strife, sexual immorality, theft, greed and whatever sin you can name, if unrepentant, brings backsliding and shame. The aim and the process of church discipline are always restorative. That is the aim, holiness, that we become more like Christ.

### ❖ The advancement of the purity and health of the church itself

So, church discipline doesn't only help the individual who is sinning to bring him back to the narrow path that leads to life, but it also helps the church corporately. When the corporate body sees that we are serious about sin and not tolerating unrepentant sin in our midst, then it helps the members of the church not to do the same and play around with similar sins. It has a sanctifying effect on the whole body when a person is excommunicated. Sin is like cancer. And church discipline, especially excommunication, is like surgery, like an operation taking the cancer out. The elders in the church should not be seen as policemen trying to correct wrongs all the time but as doctors, helping patients from deadly diseases and cancer, trying to save the body.

### ❖ Deterring or preventing others from sinning

When someone is disciplined in a congregation, it serves as a deterrent for sin. When someone is avoided and barred from fellowship, it serves as a warning. "That will happen to you if you continue in unrepentant sin". Also, believers don't lose their union with Christ when they sin; they lose communion with Christ. And so, when someone is excommunicated, as a believer, it doesn't mean they lose union with other members of the body, although they lose communion with other members. That is the goal of excommunication, for members to experience the loss of communion with the saints.

### ❖ The prevention of a judicial judgement of Christ upon the church

In Revelation 2, we read of the church in Ephesus that lost its first love and because of it, God threatened to remove its lampstand.

“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent” (Revelation 2:4,5 ESV). We see a similar warning in Revelation 2, later in the chapter, when the church in Pergamum was involved in sacrificing food to idols and involved in sexual immorality. If we tolerate sin in our midst, unrepentant sin, God could make a judicial judgment of our church and remove our church from our community, as has happened to many churches in church history. All the churches in Turkey lost their existence in centuries gone by. If we, as churches, judge ourselves, we will not be judged. Church discipline prevents this from happening.

### ❖ Promoting and enhancing the public witness of the church to the world

The witness of a church in a community is of utmost importance. Think of what a scandal a church can cause when engaged in theft or corruption, and these things are not being dealt with. When a church and its members live holy lives and deal with sin decisively, it not only brings honor to Christ but becomes a powerful witness to the world. When we live out the beatitudes described in Matthew 5:3-11, we are salt and light to the world. I’m thinking of the witness of Grace Community Church in California when they stood against the draconian laws of the state of California during the Covid 19 pandemic. Because of their stand for righteousness, they were a shining light worldwide. So, when we stand for righteousness and against sin, our lights shine bright in our communities.

### 3. Membership and discipline

Some Christians think it is unnecessary to be a member of a local church. But this notion or belief is foreign to the New Testament writers. In Acts 2:40-48,

we are told that those who believed were added to their (the church's) number, which refers to the believers, and we get that idea in other places as well. If a Christian refuses to be a member of a local church and he or she decides to visit different churches, it would be impossible to effectively discipline such a person if that person is known to others and lives in unrepentant sin. We can only practice corrective church discipline effectively, especially ex-communication, if a Christian is a local church member. The following verses make clear and imply that to be a member of a local church is Biblically warranted and necessary for every believer in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:1-28

1 Corinthians 5:1-12

Acts 2:40-48

Acts 20:17-35; 1 Peter 5:1-5

Matthew 18:15-20

#### 4. Formative or preventative discipline

When we think of church discipline, we often think of excommunication. But excommunication is only the last step in a long process of church discipline. There are two types of church discipline, formative or preventative church discipline and corrective or restorative church discipline. And ex-communication is only the last part of corrective church discipline.

Formative church discipline is a form of discipline that is constantly occurring in the life in the church, and it, as we said earlier, has to do with training, training believers and forming believers to be the people Christ wants us to be. It involves the whole discipleship process from when we come to faith until the day we die. We are all called to become conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; Eph 4:13). And the way this formative discipline is administered is through the public preaching and teaching of the Word during Bible studies and preaching on Sundays and during the worship services when we sing and pray together and partake of the Lord's ordinances. But formative discipline is not limited to these. It also occurs in formal and informal conversations with other Christians. Christians ought to

sharpen each other like iron sharpens iron. We ought to always pray for each other not only at the prayer meeting but privately (Eph 6:18). But also, private Bible reading, private Bible Study, family devotions, and singing spiritual songs are all means of grace and ways to discipline ourselves. They are all means of formative church discipline. By exposing ourselves to the word and prayer and gospel singing, we are formed into the likeness of Christ.

We can also call it preventative church discipline. It is always better to prevent a disaster than to cure one. Preventing sickness is better than curing. It is better to live healthily and eat healthily than to get an ulcer and cancer because you eat wrong and then undergo surgery and chemotherapy. So, to expose yourself regularly to the means of grace, preaching, praying, and singing spiritual songs is experiencing preventative or formative church discipline. In other words, every church member should undergo these forms of discipline every day! We are all under church discipline every day, formative and preventative discipline!

## 5. Corrective or restorative discipline

Secondly, we have corrective or restorative church discipline. This form of discipline is necessary when someone sins against you. Christ has instituted it and it was practiced by the apostles.

### **If Your Brother Sins Against You**

**Mat 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

**Mat 18:16** But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

**Mat 18:17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

**Mat 18:18** Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

**Mat 18:19** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

**Mat 18:20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

❖ Two forms: Private or public admonition/rebuke and ex-communication

So, clearly, in this passage, we see there are different stages in corrective discipline. The first stage is private admonition or rebuke. It doesn't tell us in the passage what the offence was. It is irrelevant because there are not really big and small sins, but any sin can become a sin that is worthy of ex-communication if necessary. We cannot say murder is more severe than stealing or lying, or idolatry. We must be aware not to make artificial categories for sin and say some sins are not worthy of rebuke or censure, or even ex-communication. However, some sins have more serious effects, like murder.

But as we see in this text, stage one is that if someone sins against you, go and tell him his or her fault; between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. If he repents and says he is sorry, and you can see genuine humility, then forgive him, and the process stops.

But if he doesn't listen to you, stage 2 kicks in. **Mat 18:16** But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he listens to you and the others with you, the process stops there. But if he doesn't listen to you three or two, then take it to the church. **Mat 18:17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

This is now step 3. Take it to the church. This may mean taking it to the leaders of the church who are leading the church or taking it to the whole church, the entire body. Some congregations have different views on this, but if your brother repents at this stage and he didn't repent before this time, then you have gained your brother. There would be no reason for exclusion or excommunication if he repents at this stage. Let's say we are dealing with a

brother who abuses alcohol. If he doesn't listen to you or your brothers, but he listens to the church and repents, then you have gained your brother. But if he still refuses to repent, then step 4 or stage 4 steps in, and that is ex-communication.

-

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

### ❖ Excommunication

Excommunication doesn't mean the excommunicated brother or sister cannot attend Sunday services. It means we should regard them as unbelievers because they act like one. We should consider them not as Christians but as heathen. In other words, we should evangelize them and attempt to win them back. They are, therefore, not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper, and we should not have fellowship with them as we do with other brothers. We should avoid their company. But they are welcome to our worship services as any unbeliever is always welcome—the aim of ex-communication, as always, is to restore the brother or sister. We want the brother who is abusing alcohol or who is sexually immoral to repent and be included again in fellowship.

### ❖ What happens at excommunication?

-

**Mat 18:18** Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

**Mat 18:19** Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

**Mat 18:20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

The words in Matthew 18:18-20 have nothing to do with binding and loosing demons but with excommunication and church discipline. God has given the church locally the keys of the kingdom. And that means they act on behalf of Christ as if Christ is physically with them, and when they agree on a matter

which involves church discipline or exclusion from the body, it is as if Christ is acting on their behalf. They work on behalf of Christ. The church has been granted the keys of the kingdom. And when the church agrees to exclude and excommunicate someone because of their unrepentant sin, then Christ is with them in their midst. So, the words bound and loose have to do with the exclusion and the inclusion of someone in the body of believers in the local congregation. To bind, I believe, has to do with binding them from the church, excluding them, and when the church does that, it is done in heaven. And then losing means bringing them back when they repent. When we loose them from the domain of Satan and see their repentance, they come back they will be loosed in heaven. (Matthew Henry agreed with this interpretation).

#### ❖ For which sins? Unrepentant sins

The question is, then, which sins are worthy of excommunication? And are there sins not worthy of excommunication? Remember, ex-communication is only the last stage of corrective discipline. We find many examples in the New Testament of corrective church discipline. Let's look at a few: and when we go through them, it will become clear which sins are worthy also of the last stage of exclusion.

**Tit 1:10** For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

**Tit 1:11** They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

**Tit 1:12** One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

**Tit 1:13** This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.

**Tit 3:9** But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

**Tit 3:10** As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

**Tit 3:11** knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

**1Ti 5:19** Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

**1Ti 5:20** As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear

**Rom 16:17** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

**Rom 16:18** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve

**2Th 3:6** Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

**2Th 3:10** For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

**2Th 3:11** For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.

**2Th 3:12** Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

**1Co 5:9** I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—

**1Co 5:10** not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

**1Co 5:11** But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

When we read the Scriptures above, we see that public and private rebuke was a common practice in the early church. And if we ask what sins should be the subject of public rebuke, we find all sorts, from idleness, sexual

immorality, greed, false doctrine and so on. But we see also that if a brother continues in idleness or greed or sexual immorality or being a reviler or creating division, and we can add theft, lying, blasphemy etc., he/she would be liable to be excluded and avoided. The point is this: any sin, unrepented of, should be liable to excommunication, that is, excommunicating the individual involved in sin. Think of Ananias and Saffira (Acts 5); they were “excommunicated” by God when they lied and dropped dead. Think of Aaron and Miriam. Miriam was judged by God directly with leprosy. If the church doesn’t judge those within, God will judge with his hand. We see this happening in the first letter of Corinth. When some came to the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner, to drink and get drunk, God judged them. The text tells us some are weak, and some are sick and even died because they did not discern the Lord’s body.

#### ❖ Inclusion after ex-communication

1 Corinthians 5:1-10 and 2 Corinthians 2, we find a sexually immoral man who was then excommunicated and then, upon repentance again included in the church. These two letters are Biblical examples of how to deal with unrepentant sin and ex-communication and then inclusion after this sin was repented of.

**1Co 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

**1Co 5:2** And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

**1Co 5:3** For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

**1Co 5:4** When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

**1Co 5:5** you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

**1Co 5:6** Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

**1Co 5:7** Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

**2Co 2:5** Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.

**2Co 2:6** For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough,

**2Co 2:7** so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

**2Co 2:8** So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

**2Co 2:9** For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.

**2Co 2:10** Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ,

**2Co 2:11** so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

In these two passages, we see clearly Matthew 18:15-20 in practice. A man was involved in sexual immorality; he was excommunicated and handed over to Satan (the domain of Satan). Then we see in the second letter that this man repented. And now Paul is begging the church to forgive him and to reaffirm their love for him. It is essential to include the wayward sinner back into the fold when they repent. This would mean a restoration of fellowship and restoration to the Lord's Table.

The process of corrective church discipline is not only meant for people that are involved in gross sexual sins and extravagant sins. But those engaged in sowing division or those who refuse to work can also be liable to ex-communication (Some churches have a third category between personal rebuke and ex-communication, and that is suspension; they would say that there is a stage between personal rebuke and ex-communication and they support their arguments using the texts cited above. In this stage, people would not be regarded as heathen but barred from holding the office of deacon or elder or being involved in serving in a ministry of a church because of a particular sin, e.g., for not wanting to work). If a sinner repents, we must

be willing to include him/her upon genuine repentance. The problem we have many times is that when people are excommunicated, they many times leave the church and never come back, which makes it difficult for the inclusion and restorative process to run its course.

**Sources:**

1. James, Bill, Baptism and church membership, 2006, Carey Publications
2. Henry, Matthew, Commentary on the whole Bible.
3. Martin, Albert, Corrective church discipline, 2016, Chapel Library
4. Mbewe, Conrad, God's design for the church, 2021, Crossway
5. McQuoid, Stephen, Discipline with Care, 2008, Day One
6. Pollard, Jeff, Church discipline, 2012Chapel Library,

## About the Author

Nico van Zyl was born in 1977 in Pretoria, South Africa. He grew up in Bloemfontein and graduated in 2003 with a Master's in theology at the University of the Free State. Nico has been involved in evangelism and missionary work since 1996 across Africa and Asia. Nico is passionate about reaching as many people as possible with the glorious gospel of Christ, wherever he finds the opportunity. Expect great things for God, attempt great things for God! He is a Pastor/Elder of Birchleigh Baptist Church in Kempton Park and the Conference Manager of African Pastors' Conferences, a ministry that equips Pastors and Bible teachers for the ministry. He is married to Roxanne, the father of Nicolas, and they live together in Kempton Park, South Africa. Nico has written five other books, "Making God known", a book laying out the foundations for Biblical evangelism, "The Purposes for making God known" a book to motivate Christians to make God known, "Life, Light and Truth, a guide to a transformed life"; "God, His mission and His sent ones" and "Jesus Christ, the compassionate and powerful Savior."

This book was born out of a ministry called African Pastors' Conferences. Pastor Irving Steggles was the South African director for more than 14 years of this ministry and he usually chose the topics of each year's run of Conferences. I became the Conference Manager in 2016. So, I had the privilege of organizing more than 50 conferences each year across Africa. APC works in more than 10 countries in Africa. So, each year Pastor Irving Steggles who passed away in April in 2020, chose the theme and the specific topics of that year. In 2019, the theme was, "The defining features of a Biblical Church". I had the privilege as the Conference Manager to speak at many conferences and to listen to other speakers handle the topics and prepare my own on each subject. So, in the course of 2018, 2019 I prepared and preached all the nine topics. I decided after a few years to put my messages on these topics in a book and hope that many ministry leaders and pastors would benefit in reading them when they think about what makes a church healthy and Biblical. May this book be used of God to help ministry leaders around the world to work for the glory of God and be God's instruments in building Biblical and healthy churches to the glory of God and by the power of the Spirit.



**Published by Truths Transform**  
4 Vosloo Street, Birchleigh,  
Kempton Park, 1618, South Africa